

# JOHNSTOWN AND ITS FLOOD

GERTRUDE QUINN SLATTERY



Greetings and best wishes

to

Ruth S. Hutchinson

from

Gertrude Q. Slattery







*From a pastel portrait by Niccolo Cortiglia*  
MRS. GERTRUDE QUINN SLATTERY (1936)

# **JOHNSTOWN**

*And its*

# **FLOOD**

*By*

**GERTRUDE QUINN SLATTERY**



**1936**

**WILKES-BARRE**

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## INTRODUCTION

This book has been written for my children in order to give them the facts of my personal experience in the great flood at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, May 31, 1889. Then too, in writing it, I feel I have been released from an obligation imposed upon me by my parents many years ago. They thought that my vivid description of the harrowing details should be recorded. Not least of all, I commit this to writing from a sense of justice to the many who suffered. To this circle without any thought of a wider public I dedicate my story.

The ninety-sixth birthday anniversary of John D. Rockefeller on July 9, 1935, brought the following from the press: "Into his memory have slipped great world events—the Civil War, the assassination of Lincoln, the Johnstown flood, the Russian-Turkish War in 1877, the panic of 1893, the building of the Panama canal, the World War, revolution, the Wall Street crash." I have inserted this paragraph to impress upon my children that the flood is generally considered a disaster of the first magnitude in world history.

At Coney Island more than twenty-five years ago, I saw a reproduction of the flood in miniature, which was at that time the best paying attraction at that resort. Many friends have told me of their seeing it, and how they sat enthralled as the barker led them word by word to the rush of gallons of water, and then capped the climax of his speech with the now famous line: "My God! The dam has bust."

I have seen many sketches of the horrors of the flood. Within the last ten years I have seen it depicted in the movies.

I remember my indignation and disgust at the result of the attempt to show such utter desolation.

If memory rightly serves, the impression was given that a river had risen a few feet over a town of flimsy dwellings and shanties; that a few chicken coops were floating about with some stupid people clinging to them, deserving to be drowned if they were too lazy to wade out and walk leisurely to the hill.

This to me seemed unjust to those thousands of innocent victims who through no fault of their own suffered such an outrageous fortune. So, in simple language, with truth as my guide, I shall try to tell it as I remember it, beginning with the first conscious impressions of my existence, and write it as it affected me.

As my children, Gertrude, Tom and Duard never lived in Johnstown, it should interest them to hear something of their kinfolk who settled there and to learn something of this narrow valley lying at the foot of the Alleghenies, once the habitat of the proud Red Skin, who knew it as Kickenapawling after Chief Kick-ke-kne-pa-lin, who in his day took countless numbers of scalps, and who ranked high in the councils of the Six Nations. In 1800 this land was known as Cone-maugh Old Town. Later it was renamed Johnstown in honor of Joseph Johns (Schantz), the founder, who was born in Switzerland in 1750. Through his foresight we have the public square, a much appreciated bit of green in a congested business district. We have the four corners at Main and Market Streets for government buildings, and the tract known as the Point, where the stadium now stands, and of which tract "Father Johns" said: "It shall be reserved for commons and public amusements for the use of the said town and its future inhabitants forever." He also donated a large plot for a burial ground.

For the benefit of my children I shall digress, go into detail and give the data on events of personal interest.

A visitor from the middle west once said, upon looking up at our sky, "Your sun rises at ten and sets at two." This is not much of an exaggeration.

In this fertile valley enriched by nature with coal, iron ore and lime-stone, lived a happy, industrious people occupied by diversified interests. They were the families of the first settlers. Prominent amongst these were the Levergoods, Wissingers, Goughenours, Covens, Isaac Proctors, John Francises and Joseph Johns. There were farmers living on the hillsides adjacent to the town. In the course of time came the teachers, doctors, lawyers, and storekeepers, who catered to the wants of a constantly increasing trade, and last but not least the army of men from distant points who came to cast their lot with the infant iron industry, which could thrive here on the bounteous bosom of mother earth. Here the latter possessed the magic sustenance for the upbuilding of this promising child.

As early as 1803 General Arthur St. Clair engaged in the iron business and erected the Hermitage Furnace not far from town. In 1809 the working of ores began and struggled along until transportation carried to the outside world the news of the rich deposits of coal in these hills; and man's dream of a great metal led him to this hamlet.

In 1852 the Cambria Iron Company was chartered under general laws. My father as a boy saw the workmen drive the first stake into the ground to start the mill which by 1889 was operated by one of the largest iron and steel corporations in the world, with its main rolling mill, Bessemer steel and wire works at Johnstown.

The names about to be mentioned were household words when I was young. These men were all per-

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sonal friends of my grandparents, parents, and in time our friends: George S. King, a native of Illinois, grandfather of the Linton family; Robert Hunt of Chicago; George Fritz, an international figure in iron and steel, and his brother John of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Honorable Daniel J. Morrell, brother of a prominent merchant of Philadelphia; Dr. J. H. Gautier of New Jersey; W. J. (Bill) Jones of Braddock, Pennsylvania; Powell Stackhouse of Wallingford, Pennsylvania, for twenty-five years president of the Cambria Steel Company (now a subsidiary of Bethlehem Steel Company) and his successor, Charles S. Price, father of the young writer Helen F. Price; Hartley Courtney Wolle (killed in an air-plane crash about 1920), brother of Fred Wolle, for years conductor of the famous Bach Festival held every year at Bethlehem; Frank Williams of Johnstown; Homer D. Williams, brother of Frank, for many years president of Carnegie Steel Company of Pittsburgh; Edwin E. Slick (the last three born in Johnstown), and J. Leonard Replogle. These are only a few of the well known men whose names are interwoven with the Romance of Steel, who either helped to build up this organization or who received their inspiration or early training in this mill. Messers Homer Williams, Slick and Replogle are the only ones of the above who still survive.

George S. King and Daniel J. Morrell whose faith in our town helped the infant industry through its lean years deserve credit for their work and energy in keeping alive the interest of eastern capitalists until the young mill was put upon a paying basis. Amongst the number who came forward to support this project were Charles S. and Richard D. Wood, Edward Y. Townsend, George Trotter and Mathew Newkirk, all of Philadelphia. These men and their friends lived to see this mill expand beyond their fondest dreams, and

to be repaid a hundredfold. From the crude iron ore tossed into the blast furnace a stream of gold poured forth; and the beginning of a "share your wealth" plan was created which brought prosperity to thousands of people and millions of dollars to many of the stock-holders.

The iron business became the very life of our town, so that succeeding generations grew up to understand the story of the bright little boy in the catechism class whose teacher asked: "Johnnie, who made the world?" and without hesitation Johnnie replied: "The Cambria Iron Company."

Many of the above mentioned men, their families and friends left fine homes in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and New York to come to this village, hardly upon its feet. However, the great pioneering blood that sailed the seas and trekked across an unknown wilderness was not all spent; so these gentle, cultured people brought with them art as well as ambition and in the course of time beautiful homes were built and private schools and institutions as well as public ones were started and business and pleasure went hand in hand.

The ox-cart, wagon and canal as means of travel were fading into the background, as the great steam engine loomed up to link our town with east and west.

Nine miles away with a rise of three hundred feet was the abandoned canal feeder, into which numerous crystal clear creeks flowed.

A group of Pittsburgh men appreciating the beauty of the surroundings of that place and the wild life abounding there, conceived the idea of using the canal basin for a pleasure lake.

So in the early eighties the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club was formed with the following as members: Henry Clay Frick, W. L. Dun, A. V. Holmes,

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W. L. McClintock, Colonel E. J. Unger, J. J. Lawrence, Louis Irwin, Colonel Ruff, John A. Harper and others. They repaired and heightened the retaining wall, so that the dam eventually became one mile wide, three miles long and about seventy feet deep, creating the then largest artificial lake on the continent.

So the preserve high in the hills was a popular resort in the summer for these men, their families and friends. This colony protected the birds and other forest folk and stocked the dam with a variety of game fish.

The fish disported themselves in these cool waters and they grew and multiplied and became important, so important in fact, that when days and days of heavy rains drenched the hills, turned the rivulets into raging torrents, and sent them hurtling down to pour their fullness into this reservoir, the gentle keeper felt he should not open the flood gates, lest the valuable fish escape! Is it any wonder that in his righteous wrath Isaac G. Reed wrote the following:

“Many thousand human lives,—  
Butchered husbands, slaughtered wives,  
Mangled daughters, bleeding sons,  
Hosts of martyred little ones  
(Worse than Herod’s awful crime)  
Sent to Heaven before their time;  
Lovers burnt and sweethearts drowned,  
Darlings lost but never found!

All the horrors that hell could wish  
Such was the price that was paid for—fish.

A dam which vomited a flood  
Of water turning into blood.  
A deafening, rumbling, groaning roar,  
That ne’er was heard on earth before;

A maddening whirl, a leap, a dash—  
And then a crush and then a crash,  
A wave that carried off a town,  
A blow that knocked a city down.

All the horrors that hell could wish  
Such was the price that was paid for—fish.

An hour of flood, a night of flame,  
A week of woe without a name,  
A week when sleep with hope had fled,  
While misery hunted for its dead;  
A week of corpses by the mile,  
One long, long week, without a smile,  
A week whose tale no tongue can tell,  
A week without a parallel!

All the horrors that hell could wish  
Such was the price that was paid for—fish."

In conclusion may I add that I have read many things on this subject, some authentic, some fantastic, none exaggerated, and all, I believe, with the deepest feelings of sympathy and charity. For the benefit of my children I think it would be interesting to state that my experience as told here is the original story just as it happened. All other events recorded were told to me through the years by my parents and friends and are my impressions of what they told me, and are in the main trustworthy.

I am indebted to the authors of the books I have read for some information and have quoted when I felt they could give something I could not supply.



## CHAPTER I

### EARLY IMPRESSIONS

Someone has said that life is a great adventure. The years have brought to me a deep sense of appreciation of its wonders, and a keen realization of the truth of this statement.

Standing at the cross roads, I stop to contemplate the journey thus far.

The present with its problems and pleasures bound together,—a happy time indeed; for it is ours to mold and shape. It seems to me that to keep in line and meet one's responsibilities is to play a great game squarely.

And the future: that land of fond desires. What does it hold? Eventually it may open Pandora's box for many of us; but I think we feel that it is a place where treasure is stored, wherefrom in due time we shall take the things we need or want. The old and young, rich and poor, may dream of it and look forward hopefully to it. By a master stroke a wise Providence has veiled this place from our mortal senses.

And the past: Here as memory played over my thoughts, things lately considered of great moment dropped out of sight, and forgotten things came back. In the misty distance phantom-like figures assumed substantial form and drifted forward. Then the old life gradually slid into focus, and I saw the outline of our store. It loomed up large and distinct and I could plainly see the name over the door: "Geis, Foster and Quinn; Dry Goods and Notions."

Grandfather Geis had retired, but the name remained

unchanged until 1889. Our store was always a place of great interest to my sisters and to me, even when we were mere infants; and in my mind I cannot separate thoughts of parents, brother, sisters or home from our store. When we went there, we became personages; clerks and customers always took time out to greet us in a friendly manner; the latter frequently offering to buy if father would part with us, as they both exchanged a wink or a smile. The late Mrs. Webster Lowman, mother of Dr. John Lowman and wife of the well known surgeon, and her sister, Miss Ella Stackhouse, stand out at this moment in my mind. The clerks, vying with one another for our attention, were always doing thoughtful little things for us.

One kindness, though small, remains with me to this day as I look back fondly to the case containing beads, in the years when dresses were weighted down with medallions and bands of these dainty trimmings. How anxiously we watched the clerk gather the stray ones for us, and what fun we had stringing them for ourselves and for our playmates. There were no five and ten cent stores in those days and such trinkets were in the luxury class, as were buttons. We always had the longest and finest strings of the latter too, thanks to our store. When we visited our father during the day, it was like going to the movies is for you now. It took the place of the non-existent daily show and all roads led to it. The store was brightly lighted, people came and went and news and gossip were exchanged. As a child I was proud of the line of needles we carried at the time. They were sealed in little bronze packages about one inch wide and two inches long with the images printed in gilt of my uncle, Andrew Foster, and my father, James Quinn, each man with a mustache and Van Dyke beard, making me think now of the Smith Brothers of coughdrop fame. The bronze and



*Photo by Zimmerman*

GERTRUDE QUINN SHORTLY BEFORE THE FLOOD



gilt coloring seemed to impart to each face a particularly fierce expression which makes me smile to myself now; and I often wish that I had kept a few of those packages for my own amusement, instead of handing them out proudly (unknown to the firm, of course) to my playmates as pictures of my uncle and father, while their mothers plied their needles without cost. I am sure that we children must have raked off the entire profit of those needles.

One of my earliest recollections is of my playing with a little neighbor named Charley Martin. We had two stone steps on the street for our play house, and we both wanted the top step, because it was larger and made a more spacious house in our imaginations, so we could not agree. He said: "It is mine." I said: "It is mine," and we came to a severe quarrel, all of which I have forgotten excepting the fact that he finally threw a stone which struck me on the right side of my forehead. When I felt the sting of this, I turned and rushed toward home as fast as my legs would carry; and when I came to our gate, I felt something tickling my eye, as I thought, and putting my hand up to brush it aside and looking, I saw it was covered with blood. The pain had not increased; but when I saw this, I screamed with renewed energy and the family seeing me so and hearing my cries thought I had been half killed.

I received much attention and sympathy. I was somewhat of a heroine not only in my own mind, but with my family and in the neighborhood, all of which I enjoyed at the expense of Charley's misery.

Later, however, he subdued me with the story that the stork had brought him a sister so small, that she could be put in a cigar box. This was too much for me, so Charley was re-instated as a playmate. His story proved to be true, but in a few days mother told us

that the living doll at Martin's was far too small for this big world, so an angel came in the night and took it up to heaven.

When I was a very little girl, I remember going with my sisters to a party at MacClay's. These parties were given yearly at Christmas time for fifty or sixty children, and were the outstanding events of the year for the wee generation.

Mrs. MacClay's grand-daughter, Elizabeth Tittle, seemed to be master of ceremonies. (Miss Tittle, an only child, visited in Wilkes-Barre in 1885. While here she spent an afternoon with her hostess and other guests at Glen Summit Springs, at the Paine Worden cottage, now owned by Mrs. Worden's daughter Anne Lee French. Elizabeth Tittle married Richard Arnold Esquire and went to Riverside, California, where she died a few years ago.)

I remember the tree at MacClay's looking very tall, dark and conical and how my mouth watered at the sight of long strings of pink popcorn festooned thereon, and at the sugar-coated cookies dangling temptingly, so near and yet so far. A fence surrounding the spacious grounds under the tree kept eager little hands from contact.

The ceremony of lighting the candles, and the care in putting them out as they burned low; the games we played; but best of all the happy throng at the table with ice cream, cake and candies. Then, when it grew dark, we started toward the door where a huge bag of sweets was mysteriously thrust forward and somehow we managed to hold on to it until we could surprise our parents with its glittering contents. Mrs. MacClay's daughter, Ella, a friend of mother, married George Fritz, world famous iron master; and after his death, she married Robert S. Murphy, Esq., son of Francis, the great temperance lecturer, known from coast to

coast. Robert S. Murphy, a remarkably handsome man, was a genial friend and a delightful host. He served Cambria County as District Attorney and later the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as Lieutenant-Governor. His brother, T. Edwin Murphy, married Miss Vandergrift, whose family founded the town of that name near Pittsburgh. They lived in Johnstown where Mr. Murphy practised law for years before they moved to Overbrook, Philadelphia, where they spend most of the year. Their winters are spent in the south at their home "Isleridge," Hobe Sound. There is a very nice picture of them in the Palm Beach Number of "Society," February 20, 1932.

The next high spot in my life was when Benjamin Harrison was elected President. Father and brother Vincent had lured me into the ranks of the Republicans even at this early age, and kept offering all sorts of gifts to keep me loyal. (Father had been a cavalry officer in the Civil War and was in Tennessee with General Don Carlos Buell).

My only wish was to have him consider me true to what he thought best, so all my life I have been a Republican. (However, I reserve the right to vote according to conscience.) When the victory was assured, in keeping with the custom of the times, there was a torch light parade with bands, dazzling red lights, and thousands of merrymakers. I was permitted because of my politics (of which I knew nothing) to stay up late to see the glory of it all. We were on the tin roof of our side porch on Jackson Street where my brother was putting off red-lights. When the excitement grew intense, more than he could stand, he seized hold of me by the skirts and shook me over his head like a rag doll, screaming: "Shout for Harrison! Shout for Harrison!" which I did lustily although every moment I felt I would fall through my clothes and land on the

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street below. I would like to digress here for a moment.

Speaking of General Buell reminds me of a letter my father wrote to him when I was a young girl. He admired the General very much and wanted a picture of him and he wrote the letter to Paradise, Kentucky, where General Buell lived. In due time a fine letter came with a small engraving. It hangs in our library at 624 Main Street, Johnstown. I do not know what became of his letter but I remember part of father's letter to General Buell after the latter wrote and said he was advancing in years and felt in the natural course of events he would not be in this world much longer, was pleased to hear from father and so on. Father wrote him a letter acknowledging the receipt of the picture and added: "My sincere wish is that when the final curtain is lowered on your eventful and honorable career the transition may be from an earthly Paradise to a heavenly one." This so thrilled me that I have never forgotten the lines.

To go back to my story, I must tell you another experience I had in which Vincent played a part. I had done something naughty; I am sorry that I do not remember what it was, but evidently I had done it before and was promised a punishment for it, to be administered by my father when he came home in the evening. I must have worried greatly over this, for my brother finally said: "Put a pie pan in your panties; and when father begins to drum on that, it won't hurt you, and he will let you go." I hesitated for a second as the ghostly form of my dignified father rose before me; but time was pressing and Vincent was determined, so I rushed to the cupboard; took the pan and fixed it so father would not notice it, and none too soon, for he was upon me and with folded newspaper, which he always used in such cases, began to descend upon me.

One or two blows, and he stopped. I am sorry I do not remember his expression or anything he said, but I do recall being sent to bed early and a great deal of suppressed excitement around our house for a few days. I have often wondered what would have happened if father had not had the sense of humor that saved me. After that I was somewhat of a slave to my brother ; I had to run errands and do his bidding on all occasions.

We had been living for some time in our new three story brick house, with all the conveniences of the times. I remember mother's joy and happiness in her new home, with a round of parties and never ending fun and laughter, and that feeling of security which loving parents inspire. This house stood at the corner of Main and Jackson Streets, and in the same yard with a lawn between was a dear little old-fashioned brick house painted white with green shutters where Grandmother and Grandfather Geis, mother's parents lived. As the family increased in number, and prosperity made improvements possible, three or four rooms were added and the house became a long rambling one. In this house I was born.

Uncle Louis now owns forty-seven feet of this property and we own eighty-five feet of it. This is the plot where the auditorium now stands, and which is one hundred and thirty-two feet square, bounded by said streets and two alleys. (The auditorium has a fine white maple floor for dancing. The Pennsylvania physicians held their banquet in this hall, after their convention in Johnstown a few years ago, and many of our Wilkes-Barre friends danced merrily over the ground where our home had stood.) We had trees, many of them fruits, and a garden of flowers in the front yard, and one of vegetables in the rear. Grandmother who loved flowers, amused herself in these gardens. There was a barn for our cow Daisy and Trump,

my uncle's black and white shepherd dog, where my brother used to have shows for the neighborhood, charging so many pins admission. (Pins were as precious then as pennies are now.) My sister Helen at one time was forced to eat a raw potato, taken out of the ground, as the audience looked on with immense satisfaction.

Vincent had pigeons and ducks, and strange as it may seem, these innocent little ducks played a part in my life at this time, as you will later see, and in the story they bring me to the biggest experience of my life, and the tragedy of the Johnstown Flood.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DAM FAILS

Mother's sister-in-law, Abbie Ludes (pronounced Lu-des) Geis, and her infant son Richard from Salina, Kansas, were visiting us. Aunt Abbie had not been well and had come east hoping the change would be beneficial. When her husband Uncle John returned to Salina, he took their little daughter Gertrude (now Mrs. W. H. Montgomery) aged two years, home with him. Shortly after this mother and father went to Scottdale, Pennsylvania, to stand as sponsors at the baptism of a new niece of mother. Father returned immediately after the ceremony, but mother stayed to visit her sister Mary Geis O'Brien. Our generation remembers her for the fairy tales she told in glowing language. For us many a dull day was gilded into cheerful brightness by her power to paint word pictures that have stood the test of time.

Father had been worrying about the heavy rains we were having and kept saying if they did not stop soon, he feared the reservoir at South Fork would burst. If this should happen not a house in town would stand. This was gloomy talk, people did not like to hear it, and certainly did not want to believe it, but nevertheless father kept telling everyone what he thought and he worried about it day and night.

The morning of May thirty-first was dark. There was a mist like the smoke of brushwood fires that changed into a fine drizzle and later into a heavy rain, which came down steadily. Only the ducklings were

allowed out in the yard, for the rivers were now over their banks and backing up in the streets, so that people living in the lower end were moving all household effects to the upper floors. We lived two or three hundred feet from the hill. Before noon the water had come up to the curb-stone surrounding our house, which was enclosed with an iron fence with a gate on Main Street, and one on Jackson Street. There were three or four steps up the terrace and several steps to the porch and one step into the house, so we were quite high.

When father went to the store in the morning to superintend the moving of goods to higher levels, he told the grownups at home not to venture out and by no means to let the children out; for he said we would get wet feet, and catch cold; and besides, if the water got much higher, he would leave the store and take us all to the hill. Vincent was enjoying the high water by wading around as most young boys were, and by giving a helping hand to some merchant or friend when asked. Business was suspended as all the streets were regular canals, and hip-boots and boats were the order of the day. Horseback was popular too, as were dray wagons taking families and furniture to dry ground. The water coming slowly over the curb and pavement lured me out and as it gradually came into our yard and crawled over the lawn, I could not resist putting my toes, shoes and all into the yellow, gurgling water.

At this point the ducklings were having a gala day swimming about in our big yard. I kept reaching for them until my clothes were wet, when nurse Libby saw me and forcibly drew me into the house and changed them.

When father came home to our midday meal, he was restless and worried and gave orders to keep the children in readiness for a quick dash to the hill if the rain continued.

My sister Marie (now Mrs. Andrew Hourigan of Wilkes-Barre, Pa.), had the measles at the time and I think my father was afraid to take her out of her warm bed and darkened room. He feared the light would have a bad effect on her eyes and that the chilling rains would surely give her a fresh cold, and perhaps cause serious results. If she had been well as we all were, I am sure my father would have taken us to the hill early in the day in spite of the fact that there were no accommodations there for us. I remember very well his anxiety and his lack of confidence in the reservoir.

He told my Aunt Abbie that if the dam gave 'way, not a brick would stand in the town. She laughed at him and said:

"James, you are too anxious, this big house could never go."

He said: "I have seen the dam. It is a mighty body of water at any time; and now I feel with continuous rain, it is a very dangerous proposition for the people of Johnstown."

She laughed, and after father went to the store, I heard her say several times to Libby:

"Mr. Quinn is too fearful."

And she always finished by saying that a big new brick house like ours could never be moved, much less destroyed by the water, no matter how high it became and even if the dam did burst, she said we could all go to the third floor; the water could run through the town and pass out with little or no trouble. Coming from dry and sunny Kansas, she could not imagine the flood my father feared.

Again I managed to get out on our porch and was having a great time dangling my feet in the water, watching the ducklings and the peculiar antics of the little pansies in their beds. The water had covered

their stalks and just the little heads were visible. It fascinated me to watch these turning and twisting with the surging water. This is a picture I cannot forget, those little purple faces lying on the water floating up and down like lily pads. Just then father appeared. He did not share my feelings of delight, but took hold of me, and I went through the door in double quick time, while well directed blows from his open hand were landing on me at every step. My only hope lay in bounding ahead, which you may be sure I did. It seemed I always remembered to obey father after I had forgotten to!

Then he gave me a lecture on obedience, wet feet, and our perilous position; and he said he had come to take us to the hill and that we were delayed because my shoes and stockings had to be changed again. He was smoking a cigar while the nurse was changing my clothes. Then he went to the door to toss off the ashes.

He looked out and saw a blur—an advance guard, as it were of mist, like dust that precedes a cavalry charge; and heard at the same time an ominous sound that froze the marrow in his bones—as I often heard him say. He rushed back and in his most commanding tones called out:

“Run for your lives. Follow me straight to the hill.”

Someone screamed: “The baby with the measles!”

Father dashed up and brought her wrapped in blankets. His face was white and his manner terrified me. He then looked at my Aunt Abbie and solemnly said:

“Follow me. Don’t stop for anything. Run for your lives. If the town is spared we can return, of course, but we cannot take the chance of staying here, so follow me straight to the hill.”

How anyone could have hesitated is beyond me, for the terror and anguish in his face, to say nothing of his commanding voice and figure, seemingly would have

moved a man of stone. As he gave one last look at us, we followed in panic order. Father carried Marie in his arms, while Helen and Rosemary ran beside him holding on to his elbows.

Rosemary was quite small, the water in the street coming nearly up to her chin, while she was trying to balance an umbrella over her head. She often laughed about this afterwards. It certainly gave no shelter, and really might have been the death of them, as it interfered not a little with their speed. However, she held on, and they raced through the water confident that we were coming too. When father's back was turned, Aunt Abbie stood on the top terrace of our lawn and said to Libby:

"I do not like to put my feet in that dirty water; we may catch cold, get sick and die."

Libby was holding me in her arms, and she said:

"What shall we do? I'll do whatever you say."

At this I screamed and kicked and tried to get away from Libby to run to father, but she held on. I think the nurse shared my aunt's feelings, and thought it was daring to step into the running river with one's good shoes and clothes. Why not be sensible and go to the third floor, look out the window, and watch the fearful ones dashing up the steep grade?

By this time the streets were jammed with people rushing toward the hill.

So we stood watching father and the children splashing through the water. Then Aunt Abbie said:

"Let's run to the third floor. This big house will never move."

They wheeled around dizzily, and with the speed of lightning they ran up the first floor stairs, paused a second; Aunt Abbie with little Richard peacefully sleeping in her arms and Libby carrying me.

They literally flew up the last flight to the third floor.

They ran to the front window, opened it, and we all looked out.

I can never forget what I saw! It was like the Day of Judgment I have since seen pictured in books. Pandemonium had broken loose, screams, cries and people were running; their white faces like death masks; parents dragging children, whose heads bobbed up and down in the water; a boat filled to capacity with eager, anxious passengers; household pets of all descriptions dangling from loving arms; a wagon loaded to the breaking point lost a wheel and the despairing mortals riding therein were dumped down in a heap in the filthy water. They scrambled to their feet in less time than it takes to tell it, as the on-rushing mob moved rapidly forward, bent on self-preservation at any cost.

Animals and humans with eyes bulging out of their heads struggled to keep their feet against the horde and weight of the water. They were all compressed into a solid mass that fairly wedged its way up the street, all straining every nerve and muscle to reach the hill, as the grim reaper stalked in the rear; and in the dim distance the mist and unmistakable rumblings telling in a new language that the worst had happened.

Bells were ringing, the whistles in the mills were sounding a last warning, and intermingled with these were the shrill sounds from steam engines as the throttles were opened for the last time; and now a moving mass, black with houses, trees, boulders, logs and rafters was coming down like an avalanche.

My Aunt began to realize our plight as she saw the terrified faces below.

My father now appeared as wise, far-seeing, heroic; but it was too late.

Aunt Abbie said: "Libby, this is the end of the world, we will all die together," and they sobbed and moaned in a way that made me frantic with fear.

They prayed, and I screamed and jumped up and down and cried for father, saying:

"Papa, papa," as fast as I could get it out.

Aunt Abbie said: "Let us run and get into that cupboard."

For the benefit of my children, Gertrude, Tom and Duard, I must describe the room we were in.

It was our nursery and play house. It was the nicest one I have ever seen barring none (since writing the above I have seen the Kirby children's play house at Glen Summit Springs, Pennsylvania, and must admit that by comparison ours would suffer a little), Quinn's store having furnished ours completely. There was a long center hall, a parlor at one end with plush furniture, Brussels carpet on the floor, little bed rooms for our dolls with beds, bureaus, washstands, and ingrain carpet on the floors, a dining room with painted table, chairs, sideboard, dainty dishes, hand-hemmed table cloths, wee napkins and flat-ware. In this dining-room was the cupboard.

Across the little hall was a tiny kitchen with a table, chairs, and a fine little hand-made iron stove. Back of this, hanging on little hooks on the wall, were the iron cooking utensils, and a rag carpet of bright hues upon the floor.

Each room of the entire play-house, which took up most of the third floor front, was partitioned off with wainscoting to make it "more real" for us. Adjoining this room was a big open space where Vincent and his friends were wont to do their roller skating, often to the tune of an organ, which had outlived its usefulness on the first floor, but was most welcome on the third. The din up there must have been deafening, but I have never known any children to have had happier times.

As we entered into this cupboard, my Aunt pushed Libby and me in so that we were back quite far, while

she stood with one hand on the knob, peering out as if hiding from some great monster, which might eventually find and destroy us.

I screamed and they prayed. My Aunt Abbie repeated:

"We will all die together, Lord have mercy on us."

Libby was sobbing and crying while I broke loose, banged the door back and jumped up and down in a kind of frenzy, screaming in double quick time:

"Papa, papa, papa."

They pulled me into the cupboard and my aunt kept staring out and praying. Libby held me close. Then a great shudder passed through the house, and it began to do sort of a tango step, then a regular shimmy (as you children would say). I looked through the crack in the door and saw the little pots and pans across the hall swaying and swinging in a very odd manner. Then the house gave a few violent jerks, rocked back and forth while we stood aghast, fairly out of our senses, my aunt's eyes showing only the whites. Then a shower of dust and plaster came from above, and we began coughing and choking and all at once the boards in the floor at my aunt's feet burst open and a fountain of yellow water gushed up, and over our heads. With their last breath, I heard them both murmur their supplications.

Then all was dark. I reached for a hand, but it was gone. I was alone!! Sticks and dirt were filling my mouth and I kept spitting, kicking, and thrashing about trying to get hold of something. I kept tossing my head back trying to keep the filthy water out of my mouth, and trying at the same time to say:

"Papa, papa."

This kept up until I saw a glimmer, and then a gleam of light. I managed to make my way over to it, and there beheld an opening high over my head. Having

been a prize climber in our orchard had much to do with my next move, which was to scramble up the side of what must have been the lath on the wall of part of the house underneath one of the gables of our roof. When I reached this opening, I crawled through and found myself floating on a raft with a wet muddy mattress and bedding. As I sat there, I gazed out upon this violent sea of uncertainty, drifting around with the swirling waters of the flood and the rushing, roaring reflex water of the Stonycreek which flung itself down upon us from the opposite direction, both meeting, splashing, frothing and tossing about between the hills, like boiling taffy in a giant cauldron. My frail craft kept tilting first at one end, then the other, so that I had to spring cat-like back and forth upon it in order to keep it balanced.

At this point a gold band ring, with little blue enamelled forget-me-nots encircling it, slipped off my water-soaked finger and dropped on a flat piece of wood that was drifting by. Although literally on the brink of my grave at this moment, I jumped to the end of the raft and seized the precious trinket just as it was floating toward the very hole through which I had lately crawled. Saving this ring gave me considerable momentary pleasure. As I sat there admiring anew my recovered treasure, my meditations were rudely interrupted by the sudden collision of my raft with a horse. One end of the raft shot up into the air as I clung to it and looked back in terror.

Presently a tree swung by and dislodged the horse, which I then saw was dead. The body became entangled in the branches of the tree and wended its gruesome way with the current, bobbing up and down like a rocking-horse on a merry-go-round although not with the same animated expression characteristic of those

peppy "rarin'-t-go" painted horses so dear to the hearts of children.

This encounter awakened me to the stark vividness of the scenes about me and shocked me into trembling fear. Weak and shivering, I lay down upon the mattress. Through half-closed eyes I recognized the counterpane that clung to it. I had often seen it on mother's bed. She had told me that it was hand-made, and I admired it because it depicted a pageant of some sort. I loved the story of it then, but have since forgotten it. As I gazed numbly at the figures on this quilt, I recalled the story they told. Dusk had now set in, and I closed my eyes in vain endeavor to sleep; but the cold rain pelting in my face and the swishing of the water kept hounding me with the misery of my plight, so that all I could do was to cover my face with my hands and cry bitterly.

While crying I discovered that my clothes, excepting my panty-waist and panties were all torn off.

As I drifted back and forth, I knelt and prayed aloud in German the few prayers I knew. There were many people around me, living and dead, but the most ghastly things were dead animals with their wet hair and staring eyes. These sights were so horrible to me that I cannot describe them, nor the feeling I had that all my family was lost and I was alone in the world.

While I was thus kneeling, a small white house with gable-roof came floating along with a lone man straddling it, holding on to the chimney. I called out and begged him to save me. He did not see or hear me, or else he ignored me, for he passed quite close; fortunately he did not run me down. When he was far away, I remember saying:

"You terrible man, I'll never help you."

In justice to this unknown fellow, I must say he could not in any human way have saved me. I contin-

ued to kneel up straight and I prayed as mamma had always taught us. She said God loved little children, and frequently quoted:

"Let the little children come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," and so forth.

The Salvation Army, a new organization, had established itself in our town and had captured my attention, with its big drum, the cymbals and tambourines, which the women with the blue bonnets could wield so rapidly and gracefully and with such telling effect. I had stood at the open door of their hall with a group of children, entranced by the free show and the music, and I had learned a few lines of the chorus of one of their songs. These I now used as my last appeal to the Heavenly Father. Perhaps you have heard them. The words ran something like this: "Oh! You must be a lover of the Lord—or—or—ord, or you can't go to heaven when you die, when you die—i—i—i" repeat, etc. I confessed loudly that I was a lover of the Lord and I prayed fervently that He would listen to me now, when I needed Him most.

I had great faith that I would not be abandoned. While my thoughts were thus engaged, a large roof came floating toward me with about twenty people on it. (I think this was the old Arcade Building). I cried and called across the water to them to help me. This, of course they could not do. The roof was big, and they were all holding on for dear life, feeling every minute that they would be tossed to death. While I watched I kept praying, calling, and begging someone to save me. Then I saw a man come to the edge, the others holding him, and talking excitedly. I could see they were trying to restrain him but he kept pulling to get away which he finally did, and plunged into the swirling waters and disappeared.

Then his head appeared and I could see he was look-

ing in my direction and I called, cried, and begged him to come to me. He kept going down and coming up, sometimes lost to my sight entirely, only to come up next time much closer to my raft. The water was now between fifteen and twenty feet deep.

As I sat watching this man struggling in the water my mind was firmly fixed on the fact that he was my saviour. At last he reached me, drew himself up and over the side of the mattress and lifted me up. I put both arms around his neck and held on to him like grim death. Together we went downstream with the ebb and flow of the reflux to the accompaniment of crunching, grinding, gurgling, splashing and crying and moaning of many. After drifting about we saw a little white building, standing at the edge of the water, apparently where the hill began. At the window were two men with poles helping to rescue people floating by. I was too far out for the poles, so the men called:

"Throw that baby over here to us."

My hero said: "Do you think you can catch her?"

They said: "We can try."

So Maxwell McAchren threw me across the water (some said twenty feet, others fifteen. I could never find out, so I leave it to your imagination. It was considered a great feat in the town, I know). There was a cot in this room and my rescuers carried me to it, and so it was that they had a dry blanket to wrap me in after they stripped me of my wet clothes. Mr. Henry Koch, who for years before and after the great flood conducted a hotel near the spot where I was saved, was the man who called to Max. In the room with him was a colored porter, perhaps working for Mr. Koch in his hotel, by the name of George Skinner. When Mr. Koch leaned out of the window, George held on to him by the knees so that the force and weight would not precipitate us both into the whirlpool below, as I landed.

In one book I have read, the author likened me unto "little Eva" and "the gallant colored fellow" to "Uncle Tom" and he added "George has a black skin, but his soul is white and his heart is exactly in the right place." This last sentence no one could dispute, but after reading the story I have written, you will realize that his version is but a pen picture written up hurriedly to be printed while the country was clamoring for books on the subject.

The author who wrote "Gertie tells it in her own artless way" was right when he quoted the following, "Den de ceiling-wax gun to tum down and the water wuz jess all over." There had been much canning of fruits and vegetables in our kitchen the fall before the flood and the red sealing wax had both fascinated and puzzled me. I could not figure out what the shining wax had to do with a ceiling. The word plaster had not entered my vocabulary at this time.

I have told my story as it happened, and have given credit to each one according to his risks and kindnesses. Submerged obstructions were responsible for many deaths of those who clung to wreckage or were floating about in this whirlpool. I am quite sure I would not have lived to tell this tale if Maxwell McAchren had not acted as he did.

It must have been a mighty effort for him to toss a child of six through the air, but he did it, as easily as Tarzan does it now. Wrapped in the warm blanket and in the arms of a big man, I was carried to the hill. I was so bundled up I could not see out and no one could see me. When he had gone some distance, I heard a crowd of men calling:

"What have you got there?"

And the voice answered: "A little girl we rescued."

And the crowd said: "Let's have a look." I was partially unwrapped, and several faces looked in at me

curiously. They all shook their heads and said: "Don't know her."

I spied one fellow with a red face and a very much turned up nose, squinting at me, and I remember feeling at the time: "I'd like to pull that funny little nose down for staring at me."

Fortunately the blanket was then lowered over my face and I did not have a chance to carry out what I am quite sure I would have done from sheer fright. That certainly would not have been very polite to tweak his nose; however, at that moment my one dominant feeling was fear.

The kind fellow who carried me to the hill stopped at the first house he came to which was a long three-story frame building containing six homes. He climbed eight steps to the porch, the door was opened and I was taken in.

To be in a house after three hours in a flood that laid waste a town was a sensation that I shall never forget. I was soon deposited in the lap of Mrs. Metz, mother of a large family of small children, who held me close, and rocked me gently. Then she sent one child to the attic to get the red flannels that had just been packed away for the summer and an older one, Myra, to fill some mason jars with hot water, to put "around this poor little freezing child" as she phrased it. At this time, I was looking about, I imagine, somewhat like a wild animal at bay.

Gradually the red flannels began to prick and I remembered how itchy I became as I began to "thaw out." I protested, but was overruled. There was a friendly glow from the big kitchen stove, and a little yellow light from a nearby lamp, which shone like a diamond to me then. In my heart I felt a deep sense of gratitude, but fear sealed my lips and I refused to answer ques-

tions, even though they seemed to be asked with tenderness, and for my own sake.

The many faces in that room were all looking at me with love and pity expressed in every feature. The tenants in the five adjoining houses, as well as people from the street, came in to look at me. Food was offered but I would have none of it, and later I was put to bed upstairs with three full grown women who were also flood sufferers, the Bowser girls. Though I was exhausted, sleep would not come, and out of the corner of my eye, I watched my three companions. They were so distressed at my plight. They kept going to the window, looking out and exclaiming, and gasping. Though they whispered, I could pick out such words as: "Frightful, terrible, ghastly!"

I finally slipped out of bed and went to the window and there beheld what was once our town, which was home and all we loved. I saw nothing but water, and two or three big fires reflecting over the waves, looking for all the world like ships burning at sea.

I have always felt a deep satisfaction in the fact that I saw this, for it was a panoramic view of one of the world's major disasters, and it made me understand the destruction of our town and the appalling loss of life estimated anywhere from twenty-four hundred to four thousand; the exact number will never be known. I have heard the number of lost estimated as high as seven thousand. The author of this statement claimed our cosmopolitan population made an exact check-up impossible.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FLIGHT TO THE HILL

Now to return to my father and the rush to the hill. He struggled up the street with the three children ; and when they got to dry land, he said that something seemed to tell him that my Aunt Abbie had not heeded his warning. He looked back and in the myriad of faces pushing forward, he could not see us. Becoming panicky, he hailed a strong lad by the name of Kurtz, rushing for his own life, and handed Marie and the two children to him, while he returned to find us.

Only a few steps forward and to his horror he saw at some distance a wall of water as high as our house, with trees, churches, homes, iron-beams and logs, churning and grinding everything as it plunged along. He said he stood for a second as one transfixed, not knowing whether to rush in and give his life as a sacrifice (for he saw plainly he could not reach us) or whether to flee and try to save himself ; so with mingled feelings of horror and despair, he turned toward the hill, and none too soon, as the great force of the flood spent itself upon the town and surged up the street after him.

By a superhuman effort he escaped, but only after a struggle to keep his feet while he was pursued by the last mad whirl as the water dashed up against the hillside.

While he stood looking back, he saw our new home, built just five years before, tremble and shake, rock back and forth and finally with a mighty jerk, lunge

downward, and disappear. He saw the work of his lifetime swept away before his eyes. That was as nothing, however, to the realization which must have turned his loving heart white, that two of his children were in that death-dealing debacle.

Just before this, Vincent who had been wading around the streets stopped at my Uncle Louis' clothing store. He helped to move a few things to higher levels and then he said he would have to go home and help father take us to the hill.

Uncle Louis tried to dissuade him, telling him that father was a cautious man and would think of us first. He said he felt sure that by this time we were all high and dry on Green Hill. But Vincent could not be persuaded. He said: "I must help father with the children."

He was sixteen years old and seemed to feel the responsibility which most children in a large family feel for the younger ones. Vincent was dutiful, ambitious, and the light of father's life and mother's pride and joy. I must tell you a story about him which she loved to tell us.

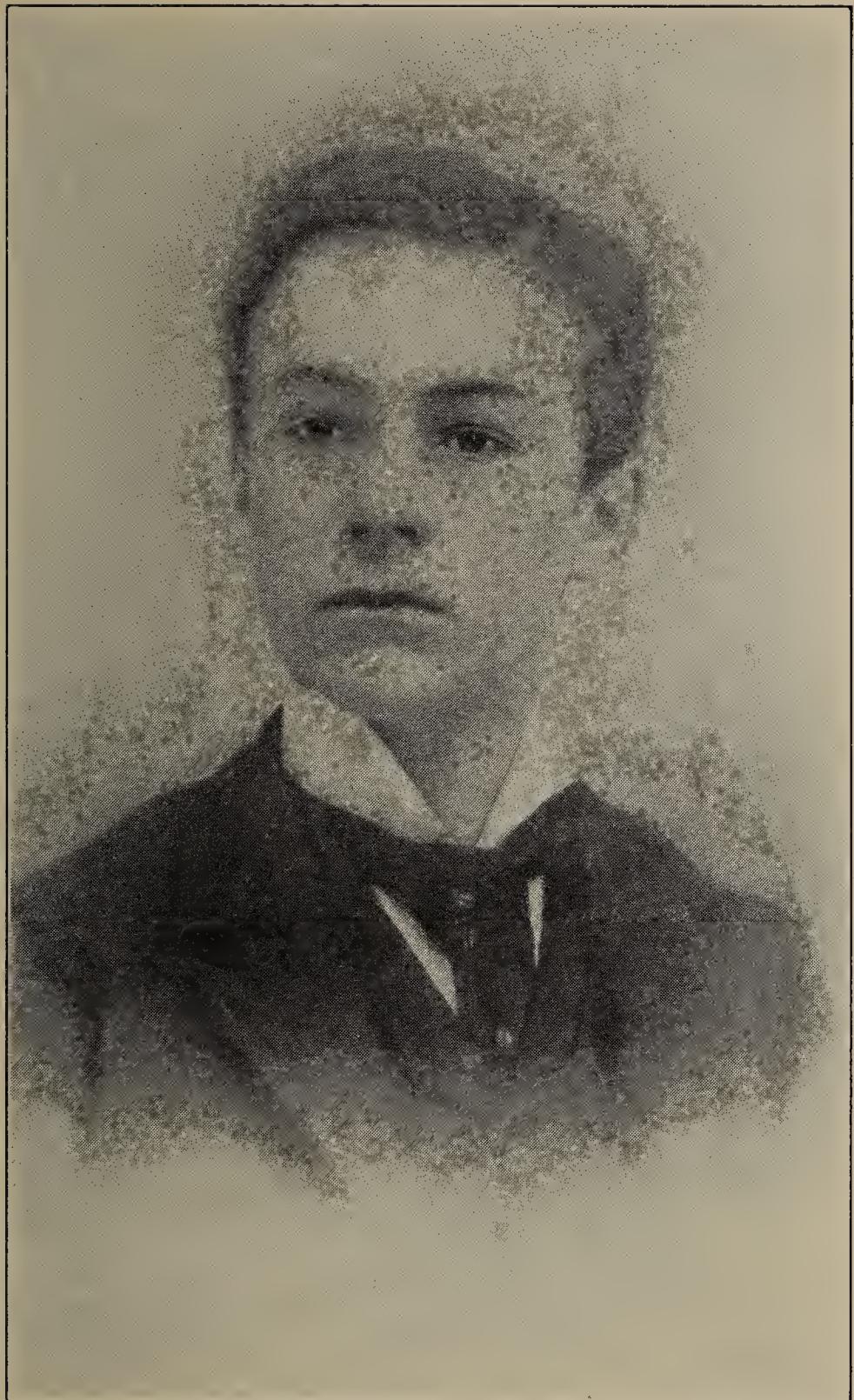
He came home from school one day and said he was going to read a paper in the public library on a certain subject some evening in the then near future. Mother and father were disturbed by the thought. They argued that he did not have the training to get up before such an audience; but all to no avail. He laughingly said: "Don't you understand, if I do well, it will be a feather in my cap; if I fail, I am only a boy?" He read his paper and it went over so well that father and mother regretted the fact that they had not gone to the library that evening to hear him and see him get the "feather in his cap."

To return to my story; the bells were ringing, one should say tolling, and the whistles shrieking a last

warning when my uncle, his partner, Charles B. Schry, with several of their clerks, my cousin, Dick Foster, and Vincent ran out of the store room and toward the entrance hall which led to the third floor. As Vincent looked up the street he saw father. So he said he would have to run along and help to get us to the hill. My uncle caught hold of his coat and held him by the arm and begged him not to go up the street. The water was very swift, whirling along like the Susquehanna at flood stage, but he tore away shouting: "I must help save the little girls."

Poor young boy! When he got to the corner of Main and Bedford Streets, just a few doors below our home, the water was almost up to his neck; the intersection of the two streets caused a swift current at this point and there, as he tried to push forward, the great flood struck him and he was buried beneath the falling buildings without a chance to save himself,—he who was so eager to help save us! A man in a third story window saw his straw hat come to the surface, spin around, float away and disappear.

In the meantime, Uncle Louis and the others had reached the third floor and joined a group of men and women who were the occupants of the offices in the two upper floors. By this time some old, water-soaked buildings had collapsed and were floating away. The situation became more menacing by the minute. As these people looked into the street they saw a heavy wooden bridge coming directly toward them, and in the distance the mighty body of water from the broken dam descending upon the town. They did not wait for further warning. They rushed through the hall to the rear, just as the bridge swung into a two-story dwelling, next door, occupied by the Murtha family, and then crashed into the Fend building, which contained my uncle's store, and the offices above.



*Photo by Burggraf*

VINCENT DAMIAN QUINN, DROWNED IN THE FLOOD



The roof and walls crumpled and the floor sank under their feet as they sped along. About eighty feet of this hundred feet long building had been battered down by the impact and the wall of water which followed. If one had cut through the roof and walls with a giant blade, one could not have severed it more smoothly. A graphic picture of the destroyed building may be seen on page 197 of McLaurin's "The Story of Johnstown." On the remaining fringe of the third floor this group huddled together for three hours. It was growing late and getting dark so they looked about for some means of escape from their precarious position. They wrenched three boards of the flooring loose and Mr. Schry, a small man, used them as a pole to reach the manhole on the roof which he uncovered. He then pulled the smallest one in the crowd, a woman stenographer to the roof. These two then pulled a man up and then the two men pulled one after the other up until they were all on the roof. They crossed over the adjoining building and thence to the roof of the Jordan and Hinchman building occupied at the time by Walter Weaver's confectionery store. Here they reversed the order of procedure and descended to the third floor by way of the manhole and then to the second floor. In this room thirty-five or forty refugees had gathered. It was the ice cream parlor of the establishment and there were lace curtains on all of the eight or ten windows. One of the men climbed up and brought down the curtains which when folded made shawls for the women to keep them warm after their exposure to the chilling rain. As they stood looking out on the ruin wrought by this flood some one saw my grandmother lying on the wreckage of part of her home. Her face and head were covered with blood. They called her son and he and two men climbed out on a telegraph post which was lying against the building. With the

help of the others inside they succeeded in getting my grandmother through the window. She was terribly injured and moaned incessantly. They all thought she would die before morning. After this some one told Uncle Louis that his father had been pulled to safety about one hundred feet beyond the spot where they had found grandmother ; and that he was then standing on the roof of the general store of John Thomas, a few doors away.

My uncle went aloft again by way of the manhole and called across to his father. When informed that his wife had been saved, grandfather solemnly exclaimed: "Thank God." They all remained where they were that night. Uncle Louis said none of the refugees in the ice cream parlor could ever forget the state of their nerves when during the darkness logs or other heavy rubbish, carried into the first floor by the rush of the flood settled down and crashed through the glass show cases in the candy shop below.

The morning after the flood the town was a sight to behold. The spectacle of the day before, a moving mass of indescribable wreckage (in which the water could scarcely be distinguished) riding the turbulent tide in grotesque, dizzy fashion, was now changed to a passive scene of wreck and ruin, staggering to the senses.

Gone were the homes, great and small ; the churches, factories, mills, even trees, so deeply rooted in the earth a few hours before, lying among the matted mass the maelstrom had so thoroughly ground to bits. Interlaced with all this were miles of heavy wire, manufactured in town, that had unravelled with the force of the flood and entangled like knotted skeins of yarn from hill to hill. Over all this lay the muck and slime left in the wake of the great inundation, with their foul

odors, beside which lime and disinfectants became veritable perfumes.

On this morning my grandparents were taken to the home of Sebastian Leis (pronounced Lease) where my father and sisters were sheltered. Dr. Schill, one of the old time German practitioners, a friend and neighbor of ours was summoned. He found grandmother's scalp torn off from between her eyes to the nape of her neck. Thirty-two sutures were required to close the wound. She gradually grew better, but carried a deep purple mark across her forehead to the day she died, nine years later. We never saw her after the flood without a lace cap with a frilled edge around her face, and ribbons tied in a bow under her chin. Grandfather was more fortunate. He was not hurt. You can imagine his feelings as his house was struck and torn apart; and you can imagine the wild ride he had as he was tossed and whirled about before he was rescued.

To go back for a moment to the house next door to my uncles store. I must tell you what happened to the Murtha family after the wooden bridge struck their modest dwelling. The father, mother and four young children went down to their doom. Ten days later their bodies were found in the basement of my uncle's store. From their positions when uncovered it was seen that the parents were embracing their little children, in a last effort to comfort and protect them.

In this family was a five-year-old daughter. This little girl was a friend and came to our house to play. On one occasion when she came, she wore a poke bonnet, with ruffles around her face and a big bow under her chin; and her lovely curls were dangling about her face and neck in a most bewitching manner.

Mother said: "Take your coat and bonnet off, dear."

The little girl looked about in a queer way and said: "Mamma wouldn't like it."

My mother said, "You will catch cold when you go out if you do not take your wraps off in the house."

Then she said: "I'll take my coat off," which she did. As she played, she was pressingly asked again to take the bonnet off and in desperation she said:

"Mamma wouldn't like it, but I guess I'll have to."

She took it off, and to our amazement she stood before us with her own hair cut short like a boy's; all the pretty curls were sewed in her bonnet. Such was the pride in long hair in those days. The child had been ill, had to have her hair cut and her grief-stricken mother could not endure seeing her darling shorn of her locks,—her "crowning glory" gone. "Jack the Snipper" had not yet been born.

## CHAPTER IV

### IDENTIFIED

Now, to get back to my story. Aunt Barbara Foster's house, next door to St. John's Roman Catholic Church on Jackson Street, had withstood the force of the flood, as the rectory and church had, but in the night, flames burst forth from the home of Morris Wolfe which had floated off its foundation and had rammed into the side of the church. The latter edifice fell a victim of the flames and the walls falling out carried the fire into the third floor of Aunt Barbara's home. Her husband, six children, their cook and she had to make their way across the wreckage by the light of their own burning home. Will Foster, their eldest child, was attending school at Mt. St. Mary, Emmitsburg, Maryland, and so escaped the flood. The fire burnt itself out at the water's edge, so that dishes and tableware on the first floor packed in mud and water were not destroyed and are relics cherished by the family to this day. My cousin, Mary Foster Smith (Mrs. George Nelson Smith) recently gave me three such pieces as keepsakes.

The Fosters at daybreak then started for a vacant house they owned on the hillside near where I had been carried. My aunt in passing saw a crowd of people on the porch at Metz's, amongst them three of her neighbors, the Bowser girls, who lived diagonally across from our late home on Main Street. In the midst of this interested group was I, looking more forlorn and frightened than ever.

The Bowser girls kept saying: "Aren't you little Gertrude Quinn?" Mrs. Metz, who had been busy in her kitchen cooking for a crowd of refugees as well as for her own brood of young children, heard this and as she came out, rolled her eyes at these three girls and said:

"Oh! my gracious, surely not one of the Quinns of Quinn's Store?"

The three girls in turn rolled their eyes at her as they nodded their assent. At this my heart gave a leap and the thought was born that perhaps I would not be turned adrift, but that because my people seemed to be known and respected I would be permitted to live in this family. In spite of the suggestion of security that I wrung from this conversation and pantomime, I paid no more attention to their inquiries than if they did not speak at all. They were discussing me at length, which I understood perfectly, but on this subject I refused to throw any light. I could hear them saying to each other: "She does look like the little Quinn girl. If we could get some of the sticks and mud out of her hair, perhaps she would look more human."

For my Gertrude's sake, I suggest here that my hair must have looked like that of the women in the book she tried to read several years ago, when after buzzing around in the library like a bee, annoying those who were interested in stories they were reading, she was told to sit down and read something.

The first book she saw she took up, which was one of the volumes in the set of "The Rise of the Dutch Republic" by Motley. After a few pages, she read aloud: "The women in the colony braided their hair like pig-tails and used little twigs to make them stand on end," which I think pretty well describes my coiffeur at the time. They tortured me with questions as to my identity; did I know my own, or my father's name?

My feelings and thoughts were of fear and that I alone of my whole family was left alive. Just then my aunt saw the Bowser girls and they saw her and they called across the street to her.

"Mrs. Foster, do come over and see if you can identify this little child. We think it is your niece, Gertrude Quinn." I tell you this because the three Bowser girls knew me as well as John Tiger, Fred Laycock, Billy Conyngham or any of the close neighbors know Duard and yet, after my experience in the water my looks were so altered, they really were not positive.

My aunt hurried over, looked at my face, hair and eyes and said:

"Yes, yes, I am sure it is Gertrude, but how could she be here? I saw her father with all the family run out of the house?"

What she had seen was the family at the gate, but she did not see my aunt and the nurse running back into the house, for at that moment she and her family were running to their own third floor. Mrs. Foster was very much excited over finding me and instead of going to her children, who she knew were safe now with their father in their new home, she dashed down the steps and ran around the hillside where she felt she would find my father. It was five-thirty in the morning when she got there. She found him washing in a hand basin on the porch. My sister Helen often described this to me in detail. Aunt Barbara rushed up and said:

"James, Gertrude is alive."

He looked up, with hands in the air, his face covered with lather and sobbed: "Do not say that please"; and she said: "James!" He said: "Please, please do not say it; I saw the house go down, chimney and all, and slide under the water. My poor little 'white head' had

no chance." Helen replied: "Father, Vincent is missing too, you do not say anything about him." And father said: "Vincent is a boy. He can swim, he had a chance, but my baby had no chance." Helen said he held his head and paced up and down the porch as he had done all night long, crying, "My poor little 'white head'." He kept blaming himself for not carrying me as well as Marie in his arms, and he kept repeating something to the effect that if he ever met me this side of "Kingdom Come" he would not be the one to chastise me (reproving himself for having given me my just deserts the day before). He lived up to the letter of his word. He did "spare the rod" (the rest of the quotation I leave to your judgment). My aunt's story seemed incredible to father who had seen the angry water beat down everything in its path. He wanted to believe her, but he felt she was the victim of her own imagination. Whereupon my aunt grew somewhat impatient and added: "James, I have talked to Gertrude. She is frightened nearly out of her senses; do come and see for yourself. She was rescued by three men and carried to a house across from our vacant one on Bedford Street."

So Helen said father ran, hands in the air (a gesture of despair, I think she must have meant) with lather still on his face, down steps and around the hill after my aunt, with my two little sisters running after him. When he came near the house, I saw him and recognized him at once. I fairly flew down the steps. Just as he put his foot on the first step, I landed on his knee and put both my arms around his neck while he embraced me. It was a reunion never to be forgotten. We both cried, and father kept saying:

"My poor little 'white head,' my poor little 'white head.'" I remember so well Helen and Rosemary

pushing against father trying to hug me at the same time, and Rosemary crying:

"My poor little sister. Oh! Oh! my poor little sister; we will never lose you again."

The crowd on the porch and in the street seemed very much touched at this meeting, and I dare say many of them too cried for joy. I shall always carry love in my heart, and deep appreciation for the Metz family who so graciously shared their little all with me. When father had to go back to the house where he was staying, Mrs. Metz said I could remain indefinitely with them. Father thanked her and said it would be wonderful as I would be near my aunt and cousins; besides, he had no home to take me to. When I heard this, I cried and clung to father, and so the poor man said: "Of course you will go with us, even though we have no place to go, we will all be together."

I was wearing mismatched shoes, one large and the other small. This wounded my pride and my distracted father had to carry me. I also wore some clothing belonging to Pansy Metz, who was about my age. So we went down Adams Street, the first one above flood level, and there threaded our way through a mass of broken, shattered wreckage. When we got back to Leis's, where father had run the day before (Mrs. Leis used to help in our store and house when she wasn't too busy at home with her own eight children), father gathered the few belongings he had, namely, his four little girls and the umbrella, and we made our way to the home of Mrs. Von Alt, whose daughter Elizabeth (the present Mrs. George Ludwig) was a clerk in our store. There I remember how cozy and warm it was. When bed time came, Helen, Rosemary and I slept on a mattress on their parlor floor; and after we were settled, dear little old lady Von Alt would come in with

an oil-lamp in her hand, look over the top of her gold rimmed spectacles, and in a sweet, motherly, German accent ask us if we were comfortable. I, for one, felt that heaven had descended upon me at that moment. Marie with the measles was kept upstairs.

## CHAPTER V

### A REAL HERO

Here I must stop again and go back to the big roof, and Maxwell McAchren upon it.

This large roof holding so many people was bound to crack up, for it was flimsy and could not be steered, and it was at the mercy of every heavy object. Among the people on the roof I recognized some neighbors. Two of them who stand out vividly in my mind to this day were the Oswald sisters. They both wore large brimmed leghorn hats with big light blue pompons on the front. I thought them very attractive, as I sat upon my raft with utter desolation surrounding me. With them were their parents and several other children. While they were trying to restrain Maxwell from jumping to his death (as they thought) to save me he said:

“I am going over to save that baby.”

They were crying and praying as they floated along on this sea without a port, their frail barge threatening to keel over at any moment.

Maxwell said: “I am going to save that baby. Do you people think an angel from heaven is coming down to help you? God helps them that help themselves.”

And with that he leapt away from them and jumped into the water. The big roof kept going for a while and then began whirling around, was struck amidship, as it were, and went down, carrying half the number clinging to it, and amongst them those two young girls. Their father then lost his grip and slipped down, and the mother on the other side reached for her husband

only to feel his head and then his hair slip through her fingers and beyond her forever, as the water closed over him.

Mrs. Oswald never quite got over this heart-breaking, blood-curdling experience. She wore deep mourning always. Her sweet smile, especially for children is a memory I cherish. When her time came to answer the final summons, I am sure that that smile became radiant, for death had no sting for her, but opened the door to the Promised Land and reunion with her loved ones.

After he had hurled me to safety, Maxwell on his raft kept going. When he reached the stone bridge he had feared for my sake, he was able to steer over to a spot where the water had cut through the ground at the eastern end of the bridge, and was pouring through like rushing rapids. With some dexterity he maneuvered his craft in such a way that it passed through and he was pulled to safety four miles below by a crowd of men with poles and ropes.

Many people who were clinging to floating objects were thrown from them as they sped through this miniature Niagara, and were lost. Mr. McAchren's rescue was a great satisfaction to our family. For years after as a child, I had a vivid mental picture of Maxwell on his raft overshadowed and being steered by the life-size figure of my personal guardian angel who had left me in midstream to watch over the gallant Max. This beautiful image came from mother's storehouse of lovely thoughts for children.

For four days at the stone bridge the debris stacked to the height of from fifty to a hundred feet, became the biggest bonfire ever seen in Pennsylvania. Fire engines were brought from Pittsburgh and Philadelphia; and although they did splendid work, it was generally believed it burnt itself out.

You will ask how a fire could rage with water every-



MAXWELL McACHREN WHO RESCUED THE AUTHOR; AND THE  
HOUSE TO WHICH HE CARRIED HER AFTER THE RESCUE



where. Simply because in the homes cooking or baking was being done. The houses in some instances were jammed up in the air by the wall of water and wreckage, and in them the stoves were overturned and the fire scattered about. Then when everything found its way to the stone bridge and packed up sky-high, these fires found more fuel in the many frame houses pitched there, wedged in so that they could not float and here a holocaust added many lives to the list of lost. It is a strange phenomenon that fire and water, proverbially opposing elements, so frequently join forces and complete the destruction that one or the other has begun.

## CHAPTER VI

### FROZEN WITH FEAR

A few days after the flood a commissary was established and I remember going there, standing in line and getting an outfit. Perhaps in the past some of you have gathered your outgrown or discarded clothes, tied them up in attractive packages to send them out to some emergency relief. Perhaps an inner voice whispered that these articles would never be appreciated. To thank you now and to encourage your efforts in this line for future charities, let me tell you that although I was a mere child at the time I distinctly remember the joy and happiness we all experienced as little flannel petticoats, stockings and breakfast shawls (as they were called) were handed out. We did not go through any formalities when we received our allotment but sat down on the street and put on the stockings and clothes. I can truthfully say that we children were thrilled just to feel warm, and we spoke of it as the most important topic of the day. I am sure you can all picture my father's expression as he watched us getting into clean clothes which he could not provide.

About this time Vincent's body was found in the yard of my grandfather's lawyer, Jacob Zimmerman, Bedford Street, not very far from the spot where he had last been seen. Father sent a message to mother. My Uncle Edward at whose home my mother was visiting then came to Johnstown, and preparations were made to take us to his home in Scottdale. So with our

commissary clothes, I remember being guided and carried over dirty, slimy puddles and dangerous pools, and finally getting into a passenger coach. Rosemary and I sat together, each with a little woolen breakfast shawl pinned together with the famous fraternity pin, the family safety. One shawl was gray and black and the other bright turkey red and black check. Although it was June, the shawls were needed. Uncle Edward sat back of us. When it became known that flood-sufferers were on the train, we were besieged by curious and eager fellow-passengers to tell something of our experiences.

Rosemary begged me to tell what happened to me, but so far I had not told my story as I was still suppressed with fear.

This feeling kept my mind busy so that I did not seem to have any other interest. Therefore Rosemary told about our terrible sufferings, enlarging upon my experience and separation from the family, the loss of our home and our brother Vincent's death; and when she finished from a sober and sympathetic group a shower of money was dropped in our laps, so great we could not hold it. Our uncle had to fill his pockets. This must have been like manna in the desert to our parents.

I do not recall the trip to my aunt's house where mother, our infant brother Tom and sister Eulalia awaited our coming. Shortly after our arrival someone in the household broke the news that mother was going to brother's funeral. This completely upset me. I cried and mother tried to reason it out for me but I said I would have to go where she went. I do not remember parting with her, so it may have been that she finally slipped away while I slept.

When I looked for her and found that she had gone, I was distracted. I cried constantly and would not be

comforted. Things went from bad to worse. I kept running away to find her. The neighbors all joined in trying to help keep me in bounds, and to entertain me. One kind soul sent a huge chocolate layer cake just for me so that I could have a party; but my two small fists soon turned this into crumbs, much to the chagrin of my aunt. Dolls and toys of all descriptions came for me. The antics of a pet raccoon in a cage in a neighbor's yard (Mrs. Green) brought sweet oblivion, but only for a few moments. When I went on the war path again my poor aunt with her own family of five small children must have been beside herself.

Then one day I heard the whistle of an engine and in desperation I broke out of the yard and ran with all speed and sat upon the rails awaiting the oncoming train.

Fortunately I was missed at once and my cousin Stella (who for years has written under the pen name of Troella V. Mills) spied me on the track. She dashed down, snatched me up in her arms and staggered up against a fence to safety just as the locomotive and the long train of cars thundered by. I know I would not have moved for somehow in my childish mind, I thought that would take me to my parents.

Shortly after this hair raising experience and near tragedy, mother came back. I remember that her sweet face, always wrapt in smiles for us, was different. She sobbed frequently as she clasped us to her heart and we looked up at her curiously and felt close and protected in her arms. If ever children were blessed with a loving mother who was efficient and equal to all emergencies we were those fortunate children.

There was hustle and bustle about my aunt's house for a few days, as kind neighbors came in and joined her in making clothes for us, and then mother took us to Latrobe where we visited the Head family. Later

she took us to Pittsburgh where we were a free show wherever we went. We first stayed with the Woods family, cousins of father, where we were showered with loving kindness. Then we spent some time with the Bigley-Ganster family where we were very happy.

Later in the summer we went to live with Aunt Ningie (pronounced Ning-ie, to rhyme with king), a first cousin of father. She was a childless widow and lived on North Highland Avenue near the entrance to the park of that name. Here we had every comfort and luxury of which the flood had robbed us. It was here that we had our first tricycle ride, which we all thought the nicest sensation in the world.

We worked hard to get the tricycle up the steep grade to the park gate so that we could coast down later in hair-breadth fashion. Gifts were showered on us daily and we continued to be the cynosure of all eyes.

Cousin Marie Travers, an only child, and her parents lived with Aunt Ningie. I think she enjoyed the influx of the big family as much as we enjoyed the novelty of her being there. Every day we had a tea-party for our playmates in the yard under the wide-spreading branches of an old cherry tree. About this time Helen and Rosemary were taken to Salina, Kansas, by our uncle, where they stayed with mother's relations and had every joy and happiness of which children their ages dreamed. In the meantime father was working and slaving to get on his feet. Every property we owned was in the center of the town. Not one building of ours had withstood the force of the flood, although all were of brick construction. In the "Official History of the Johnstown Flood" (by Frank Connelly and George C. Jenks, Pittsburgh, 1889) I noticed the loss of Geis, Foster and Quinn, estimated at sixty thousand dollars. They were grandfather Geis, Uncle Andrew Foster and my father, James Quinn. For the benefit

of my children, I must tell you here that as youngsters we used to call this firm "Geese, Feathers and Quills," as mother's youngest brother Louis had named it. In 1885 he had gone into the clothing business with Charles Schry under the name of "Geis and Schry." Their loss according to the same book was thirty thousand dollars. Many years ago Uncle Louis opened the large carpet and furniture store which now bears his name. In it twenty years ago he built a small white house to show off the different furnishings for a home, the first house within a store that I had seen outside of the famous one in Wanamaker's old New York store.

## CHAPTER VII

### HELPERS ARRIVE

I have heard of the great thrill our stranded towns-people experienced when the first train on the Baltimore and Ohio branch line slowly pushed its way into our town from Somerset county, with the first contingent of newspaper men aboard. We who were very young at the time can only imagine now, how pleasant it must have been for our elders to feel that the arteries of the great Press were carrying the story of their distress to every civilized country on the face of the earth.

What a tower of strength those papers proved to be at the zero hour. There was established through them at that moment a universal republic. Sympathy had welded the hearts of the people of the world together. Collections were taken up everywhere and money flowed in at the rate of one hundred thousand dollars a day. If there could be a silver lining to such a disaster it was the stupendous charity manifested by our neighbors around the globe. Aid in every form was advanced to our stricken city.

Six thousand workmen were brought in by Philip Flynn of Pittsburgh, a contractor, and his brother William, later a politician of wide repute.

They accomplished wonders with this force of men and hundreds of wagons; and with more dynamite than had ever before been used in the country. To keep six thousand men fed in a devastated valley was not an easy task, but it was done. At one "cook-house" thirty-four hundred men were fed at one meal, nine hundred at a

single table. To haul all the food to the town, and then distribute it was an immense undertaking in itself.

To recall our condition at this time: Father had succeeded in finding near the hill a little yellow frame house which had lost its tenants, a bride and groom, through the flood. The town was in an awful state when we left Pittsburgh (about three months after the flood) to take up our lives again in our native city. I remember the nauseating odor as we walked across planks bridging puddles, vacant lots and cellars. White heaps were strewn over the town and the word "disinfectant" was added to our young vocabularies. On our way to our new home we saw a group of men unearth the body of a young woman, with particles of her red and white checked gingham gown still clinging to her. We were not encouraged to look, but I saw that. The town's breathing space which we called "the park," with its lovely old trees and shrubbery, was bereft of its verdure; not one trace of green to mark the spot, but in its stead was a town of tents, camp equipment, and soldiers keeping order. Scores of iron safes taken from the ruins and pried open were scattered about.

There was also a mushroom village of portable houses in the town, brought in for the homeless. What a blessing these must have been for the destitute who had to remain there. One type called the "Oklahoma" had one room and an attic; the other a "Hughes" house, two rooms down and two up. We had some friends who were living in a "Hughes" house; and once when I was playing with Josephine (a cousin of Elizabeth Tittle), Mr. Tittle began the preliminaries of a sneeze, whereupon Mrs. Tittle screamed and said:

"Hold the lamp," which she finally reached herself and steadied while Mr. Tittle, a dear old man, resembling in no small degree H. W. Longfellow, the poet, had a good old-fashioned sneeze.

Why these houses did not blow over during the equinoctial storms that year was more than my parents could understand. It was a comical sight to see one old rotund woman living in an "Oklahoma" hobble or wobble up the ladder to her dark and mysterious attic. We used to play around her door and run errands for her just to see her make the ascent. The word play brings the thought to my mind that you children probably wonder if we lost any playmates? We did indeed. Children were the special prey of this disaster. Homes were strangely quiet thereafter. The comfort of a little white marker, with a sleeping lamb or little angel carved upon it was denied to many of the heart-broken parents, who searched for, and hoped in vain for some trace of their darlings. Gertrude Howe, age six years, a near neighbor and playmate who came daily to our door, used to amuse my parents as she earnestly inquired each time for "Dirty Tin" as she pronounced my name in her best effort to say "Gertie Quinn!" She, an older sister Elizabeth and their mother were drowned. Mrs. Shumaker and her four children, two of them, Edith and Irene playmates of ours, were also swept away to their deaths. Roy Swank the small son of Morrell Swank who lived across the street from us, perished with his mother. These are only a few of the innocent victims from our immediate neighborhood.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THRILLS OF OTHERS

Many of our friends and neighbors went through the flood as we did. Perhaps you would be interested in hearing something of the way in which the flood dealt with them.

As you know Mrs. Russell Uhl, the former Sarah James, it would be interesting, I am sure to hear something of her family and their experience.

They lived at the corner of Main and Market Streets, in a three-story house, not far from the "Point" where the little Conemaugh and Stonycreek converge and form the Conemaugh.

Here the ground sloped down gradually toward the rivers and was much lower than the Main Street sector, three squares above where we lived. The location of Johnstown made it an easy prey to floods, as these two rivers one on the northern, the other on the southern boundary, meeting in wishbone fashion, and a few hundred feet beyond this, the Pennsylvania Railroad's low arched stone bridge over the stream formed a barrier that sent the rivers over their banks almost yearly.

In 1889, the unprecedented rains that fell over the Atlantic States from Tioga county on the New York line to Bedford on the Maryland line played havoc in many towns, Williamsport and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D. C., suffering heavy losses. In Johnstown these two rivers were forced out of their channels, early on the thirty-first of May. The lower end of the town was soon inundated; and as many of

the houses had but two or three steps to the entrance, it was not long until the water was coursing through the lower floors. So the James family, whose home was of brick construction and stood higher than most of the other houses in the vicinity, invited many of their friends in to remain until the water might subside.

This was not unusual, so neighbors made the best of their plight. However, on this day the water kept rising until it was running a swift current several feet deep. Huge logs and driftwood were plunging along, banging into things left and right, and the situation became alarming. By midday the James house had forty human beings sheltered there. The rising tide drove them to the second floor and later to the third floor. Then at about three forty-five in the afternoon the crash came. All the houses in the neighborhood were torn from their foundations and reduced to kindling wood.

The family next door to James' consisting of Squire Fisher, his wife, four children and two women who worked for them were drowned. Two other children Luella (now Mrs. Clarence Ferguson) and Edgar escaped, because they were at a party at a home on the hillside in Kernville.

The James house was swept away, whirled around dizzily until the two lower floors had been ground to pieces. The terror of this can only be imagined, words fail to describe it.

The roof and third floor kept together, floated on some wreckage and when the water went down many hours later, settled several blocks from its original location, with every soul saved, each one to tell a more blood-quickenng tale than the other.

Another story of neighbors is of the Fenn family, living next door to my Aunt Ellen Quinn on Franklin Street, consisting of the parents and seven fine young children. The father and all the children were lost. A

few weeks later a daughter was born to Mrs. Fenn, whom she named Rachel Faith. She felt this child would be a comfort to her, but the ordeal of the flood and living conditions proved too hard, and in a few days this infant joined the others in Paradise. The passing of this large family of innocent little children in such a violent way always seemed one of the most cruel blows dealt by the flood. The mother lived to be eighty-four years of age. A very fine family group is reproduced in McLaurin's "The Story of Johnstown," page 231.

Bessie Fronhiser, the beautiful little seven-year-old daughter of James and Katherine Vowinkle (pronounced Vow-ink-l) was lost. It was always whispered that her head had been cut off by some heavy timbers which fell on her when the house collapsed. Her mother and an infant also perished. The house of Mr. Fronhiser's sister, Mrs. Kress, at No. 530 Locust Street, was one of the few to stand, and the Fronhisers lived there for years after. I often played with their cousin, Amelia Kress; and we used to walk reverently into the parlor and stand before a lovely oil painting of Bessie, seated on a swing. This picture is also in McLaurin's "The Story of Johnstown" on page 239. Bessie was a sister of Dorothy Fronhiser Meredith, now of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The latter's leg was fractured when the house went down, and her heroic conduct was inspiring to say the least. It was impossible to do anything for her that night; and it was twenty-four hours before her father was able to find a doctor. He was most fortunate in meeting an old friend who was a fine surgeon, Dr. Webster Lowman, who went over debris up to the second stories into the attic where this child lay. There Dr. Lowman broke an old store box and made splints; and with an old sheet which they tore up he was able with the assistance of Dorothy's

father to set the leg, and bandage it. Though this child had no anaesthesia and no comforts or conveniences, she told me herself that Dr. Lowman did such wonderful work that she has never suffered any ill effects from the break.

Though her father and brother were saved, they all had nerve racking experiences in the heart-rending deaths of one-half of the members of their family. Years ago Dorothy came to Wilkes-Barre to attend the wedding of Miss Madeliene Palmer (daughter of the late well known lawyer Henry W. Palmer and his wife Ellen Palmer whose philanthropies have endeared her to a wide circle in Wyoming Valley). It will be interesting to note that while in this city Dorothy was the house guest of the then Mabel Murphy, now Mrs. Frederick Hillman, our neighbor.

In Scranton, Pennsylvania, at the present time are four people who were born in Johnstown before the great flood. They are the children of the late Reverend David C. Phillips, who was rector of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist church on Vine Street. This edifice was demolished and twenty-two adults and twenty-eight children under fifteen years of age belonging to the congregation were drowned. Mr. Phillips, his wife and their four children all under ten years of age were imprisoned early in the day by the high water in the streets. As it entered their home they sought refuge on the second floor in a rear room where from a window they saw the mountainous wave bearing down upon the town. They fled in terror to a second and then a third room toward the front of the house, where the parents helped their four little children to mount to the top of an old heavy hand made book case. In a few seconds there was a crash and the two rear rooms fell out into the muddy stream. At the same instant the water rose within a few feet of the ceiling and the parents stood upon a

bed and struggled to keep their heads above the water. Mrs. Phillips joined her husband in the Lord's Prayer as death appeared inevitable. The little daughter caught the spirit and with her hands folded in an attitude of prayer she recited,

“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray Thee Lord my soul to keep,  
If I should die before I wake  
I pray Thee Lord my soul to take.”

At the conclusion of this trust in God Mrs. Phillips smiled faintly at her little daughter, a smile not forgotten to this day. When the water went down an hour or so later Mr. Phillips found there was no exit for them. His son six years of age brought his little hatchet for his father to cut a hole in the match board partition. Before the opening was large enough to effect their escape the hatchet fell into the adjoining room. Then Mrs. Phillips and her husband used their hands to tear the wall apart which they succeeded in doing at the price of badly cut and bruised hands. They made their way to a front window and stepped out on Main Street where a crowd of men on the roof of the general store of John Thomas surprised and pleased to see them emerged from the ruins—shouted a greeting of encouragement to them. Men in a building near Frazer's corner lowered a rope, and thus they were taken up one at a time beginning with the youngest child until they were all safe in the third floor where they found shelter for the night. Reverend Mr. Phillips was a writer and wrote under the name of Celyddon. His daughter Martha has taught in the public schools of Scranton for years and at present is supervisor of handwriting in those schools. Her brother David W. a well known lawyer, was internal revenue collector for

twelve years. Another brother, Dr. Arthur, is at the head of the educational division of the reformatory at Huntington, Pa. Roswell, an insurance broker and youngest member of the family and unmarried, lives with his sister. These three men were all graduated from Lafayette College as were the three sons of Dr. Arthur and the oldest son of David, who is now studying law at the University of Pennsylvania. Their uncle, Seth Phillips, had a dry-goods store on Main Street. Though I was a very young girl when he went out of business I remember him distinctly as a gentle, kindly person.

## CHAPTER IX

### TRAGEDY AND HUMOR

Captain Gageby (later Major) of the U. S. Army, helped to rescue Dorothy Fronhiser and her brother Jacob.

Mrs. Gageby and her sister, Miss Etta Fend, were in New York at the time. All communication was cut off and they were nearly distracted with fear and grief. Some reporters from that city and an editor of the New York World had a special train made up, and they kindly brought these two women on it. When they reached Cumberland, Maryland, a newspaperman told them that their family had been saved. They felt very grateful for this news and were indeed relieved when they reached town and found it to be true.

Their home was a sorry sight! They found it moved partly off the foundation and slumped over at a rakish angle. Two thirds of the brick work was destroyed, all stairways demolished and debris stacked up to the second floor. A box car (freight car in your vernacular, my dear children) was washed over the foundation and these two women climbed over it to reach the second floor to seek some valuables which fortunately were undisturbed in a dresser drawer. A trunk containing a pair of handsome diamond earrings was washed out of the house and remained in the yard for days when it was discovered and the earrings found, none the worse for their ride and their immersion in water and mud.

As Mr. Fend had studied engineering, he directed the work on his house which had been condemned; and

through his efforts it was braced up and held together and rebuilt. It stands today in perfect condition, strong and sound, a monument to his work and energy. If you look closely at it, you will see a white marble brick above the second floor line which he thoughtfully inserted as the high water mark of '89, a mute message to those who are interested.

This house is somewhat like our own home at 151 South Franklin Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, built of red brick, having a mansard-roof and practically the same plan on the inside, although the exterior is far more imposing than ours, with a massive porch with tall columns added since the flood.

When Major Gageby's only child, Emma Fend, was married more than thirty years ago to Captain George Cocheu of the U. S. Army, they had a military wedding. My three sisters and my brother-in-law, Evan du Pont and I attended. It left an indelible impression on my mind, as it is the only military wedding I have ever attended.

White canvas laid from the bride's door all the way down the long stairway and covering the floor of a huge room on the left as one entered the house, gave a certain festive air to the place. At the far end of this room dark palms and potted plants banked together to transform that end into a bower, while in striking contrast to the white and lovely lacy green were several handsome large American flags. The thrill I experienced upon entering this room was almost overpowering. I did not lose consciousness, however, for I distinctly remember the bride in shimmering white satin and the groom and his best man, Captain Paul Bunker, a very handsome young soldier, in the colorful uniforms, representing their rank at the time.

Later when all guests and the wedding party assembled in the dining room, you can imagine, dear

children, how impressed we were when the bride cut the cake with the sword that had hung at the groom's side ; he and the maid of honor held the long white veil back so that the bride would be unhampered in that first domestic task. We all received a piece of this cake to dream on. I fancied as I retired that a strange and fascinating blonde should appear in my dreams with his name and address plainly written for my benefit ; but when morning dawned I realized that I had gone through the Spanish American War again, flags flying, sabers flashing, guns booming, bombs bursting in air, and swarthy sons of Spain sneaking around trying to get a shot at me. The barrel of a gun which I felt near my heart proved to be a nudge from my sister, telling me that it was time for breakfast. So I was brought to earth, but my patriotism went unquestioned with my family. George Cocheu is now a lieutenant-colonel.

W. Horace Rose, prominent lawyer, and his family, all close personal friends of ours, ran to the second story of their home at two o'clock as their first floor was flooded. In this family were the father, Mrs. Rose, one daughter, June, W. Horace Jr., Forest, Percy Allen, and Winter, the four sons lawyers later. As the rush of the water came, they ran to the third floor and thence to the roof where they waited in fear and trembling ; not for long, however, as the flood was upon them. Their house crumpled, the roof gave 'way scattering the family temporarily, and fastening Mr. Rose between heavy timbers, which fractured his collar bone and broke a rib. With the help of his son Percy, he managed to get back to part of their roof where he lay prostrate, and here he was forced to witness the apparent death struggles of his wife and daughter, utterly helpless to assist them. Winter, the second son, managed to help his mother and June back to the roof.

They rode the waves for hours, and finally drifted down behind the residence of Dr. S. M. Swan at the corner of Vine and Stonycreek Streets, where they were saved by means of ropes thrown across to them. Horace Jr., drifted away from the family and after an eventful ride was taken almost exhausted from the debris into the house of Frank Coleman. Percy Allen Rose, now and for many years one of the outstanding lawyers of Cambria County, could unfold a tale of horror, as each one of his family had a separate and terrible experience when the roof broke apart.

Just before the flood, Rev. Dr. George W. Wagoner of the United Brethren Church, his wife, and three daughters were at home. The daughters were playing the piano and singing to while away the dull hours as the water surrounded their home. They did not know the reservoir had broken. Perhaps they were fortunate in not realizing their plight and inevitable doom. When the avalanche of water struck their house, it collapsed and they were all lost. A married daughter Mrs. Bowman, her husband and two children living in Woodvale, also perished. Woodvale was obliterated by the flood. Of this relationship six were found and three are listed as missing. Three daughters and a son survived. One daughter married Dr. A. N. Wakefield, whose nephew is the now famous composer of Indian music, Charles Wakefield Cadman, who was born in Johnstown. The son who was saved was Dr. George W. Wagoner, who lost his wife and children. Years later he married into the well known Suppes family. His wife Gertrude and three grown children survive him. When a young man, Dr. Wagoner went to school with the late beloved Dr. George W. Guthrie of Wilkes-Barre.

Amongst our friends who suffered agonies was the John Stenger family. Mr. Stenger was a prominent

merchant. When he was a young man, he worked as a clerk in my grandfather's store. He was conscientious and thrifty, saved his earnings, and later embarked in the dry goods business for himself. He and his family occupied a three story building on Main Street. As was customary at the time with many storekeepers, the family had living quarters on the two upper floors.

On this day the parents and their six little children were in the storeroom on the first floor, which was built several steps above the street level. They were looking at the water rising inch by inch when they heard the whistles and the noise of the approaching avalanche. The stairway was in the rear and they all raced through the store and succeeded in getting up the two flights to the third floor. There the family knelt in prayer. Suddenly a great floating object struck their building, severing it. Part of the walls and ceiling came crashing down, falling upon the two young sons and carrying them many feet below. The family on the jagged edge of the upper half of the remaining floor could hear the cries of the two little lads calling to their parents to save them. Could any torture be more horrible?

As minutes passed, their cries became fainter and fainter and then ceased altogether as they slowly smothered to death. The next day their bodies were recovered and placed upon some shutters and taken to the home of Conrad Hornick, their father's uncle, who lived on the hill. As they were being carried to his home, their parents were coming down to look for their bodies, and they beheld their two little boys on the improvised stretchers. They were soon taken to their final resting place on a sunny slope to sleep forever beyond all earthly cares and sorrows.

Mrs. Stenger also lost her father and her sister. Later when friends called upon her they marvelled at her fortitude. Each friend seemed to voice the feeling that

if she had gone through such stinging sorrow, she would have lost her reason. Mrs. Stenger, however, had to live and smile for the little ones who were left and who looked up to her and her husband so hopefully. She always said "We must bear these sorrows and trials, and only time can heal the wounds." Such courage! It seems to me that noble souls arose after that cataclysm to heroic heights, reflecting much of the Divine, inspiring their friends, and filling all with the deepest feelings of love and admiration.

Henry Derritt, a respected colored barber, had been helping Mr. John McDermott to move the furniture in his store to the upper floors. Just about the time they had finished this task the flood was upon them. Mr. Derritt, a tall portly man, was caught up by the waves and tossed and rolled along at a furious pace, but he managed to get hold of one thing after the other and kept his head above water. He finally drifted over to the rear of Stenger's store; and although almost exhausted, he climbed over the railing of the porch on the second floor which was level with the flood waters. In his trade as a barber he had served many Germans and from them had learned a few words and phrases of their language. Mr. Derritt told this story to my Uncle Louis who told it to me recently. He said when he landed on the porch, he found himself bereft of his clothing, every stitch having been torn off during his desperate struggles to free himself as he became entangled in the debris, which contained among other nondescript matter much barbed wire manufactured at the local wire mill. He said he went through the door and made his way slowly toward the voices he could hear in the building. There was not any heat, and night had descended upon them. There were no lights. As he suddenly emerged from the darkness, his giant ebony frame covered with mud and dripping wet, his arms

extended in an attitude of prayer or pleading, you can imagine the grotesque figure he presented to the little band who were huddled together fearing that the water soaked foundation would collapse at any moment, and that the building would fall and they would all be dashed to death. How intensified their fears became as they looked up and saw this huge form groping his way toward them. Horror and terror seized them and by the expression of their faces, Mr. Derritt said: "I knew they all thought I was the schwartzte teufel (black devil) himself."

When he told this story, he saw the humor of it and told it with much gusto and as a joke on himself.

I remember this story well, for when I was a young girl at boarding school Gertrude Stenger told it to groups of her friends, where I heard it many times. She never failed to impress her audience with the quality of fear and terror the refugees felt as they first saw the shadowy outline of this monstrous creature as he came slowly toward them.

Mr. Derritt told Uncle Louis when he assured these frightened people that he was human, told who he was and his story in detail, they were all very kind, and sorry for him too. Mrs. Stenger gave him a woolen skirt and you may be sure he was deeply grateful for it. He appeared in that outfit the next day and some friends managed to find a garment or two that added much to his comfort and covered him at the same time.

Gertrude Stenger told me that many who had sought safety in their building were furnished with clothing from the stock room on the third floor, part of which had withstood the flood and crash. Many men were very happy to get a dry wrapper or a New Market Coat (a long coat buttoned from top to toe), very popular with the women at about that time. Many were given toboggan caps of bright colors with the

pert little pompons on top, which must have presented a striking contrast to the drab scenes in the water-soaked, desolated valley of the Conemaugh on that day.

Shortly after the flood some men were seen (by the Williams family, whose sons Frank and Homer are mentioned in the foreword, who lived next door to the Stengers and whose home while wrecked did not float away) entering the Stenger building. They made their way to Mrs. Stenger's bureau where they found her jewelry and took among other prized pieces, her amethyst bracelet, brooch, and ear-rings. When the militia arrived, this looting was checked. Mr. Arthur Hillman of Wilkes-Barre, a young man at the time, spent several days with his regiment at Johnstown, and lately, his wife, the former Emily Darling, told me she remembers well his description of the horrors he saw while there.

Another story that touched my heart was that of a young man whom I shall call Bob in this sketch. He worked for the American Rubber Company at the time of the great flood, trying to earn enough money to put himself through college. Unfortunately for him he happened to be in Johnstown at one of the hotels on the thirty-first of May.

The heavy rain and flooded condition of the streets were most forbidding, and everyone tried to find some cheerful indoor work or play.

After luncheon Bob and some companions went to the pool-room connected with the hotel to play a few games in a cheerful atmosphere. As he took up the cue and was about to make a shot, the building crashed down upon him and he found himself struggling in the dark, in the filthy water.

Presently part of the wall fell out and he saw the flood in all its magnitude. Being a strong young fellow and a good swimmer, he struck out to try to save himself. The first thing he saw that came his way was

the floor of a bath room with most of the fixtures intact. There was a man crouching on this floor apparently crazed with fear; and as Bob grasped the side to pull himself up, the fellow struck him over the eye with a piece of lead pipe. Life and self-preservation were stronger than the blow, however; and in spite of the excruciating pain and the blood flowing over his eye, he managed to get upon this floor, and here I presume they fought it out and finally our friend Bob went down for the count. As evening shadows were falling, he became conscious and found himself still floating about. He looked around for his assailant but he was nowhere to be seen.

I cannot say whether he fell during the battle or was thrown into the water by the infuriated Bob or whether he had a chance to jump to safety when he saw the other stretched out cold upon the frail raft which he evidently thought big enough to support only one person.

The tragic circumstance of the encounter was that Bob's eye had been knocked out by the blow from the heavy pipe. When his suffering became so intense that he could endure the pain no longer, he gave himself up. He recommended his soul to his Maker and consciousness left him.

Death may be courted and yet for some it is not so easy to die, and so it was with Bob. Imagine, if you will, his amazement when he awakened days later and found himself on a cot in an improvised hospital; his wet, foul smelling clothes gone, and comparative comfort bringing rest and relief.

Skilled doctors, kind nurses, and willing workers had operated upon, dressed the wound and taken care of this lonely, unfortunate fellow. Ah! but the bitterness of the unnecessary loss of his eye! There was the rub. As time went on, the poor fellow brooded over

this. His gentle nature could not fight the battle of life with the same zest after this loss. Though he travelled far and wide, he could not forget. Neither could he win for himself the place he had dreamed of when this cruel blow struck him.

Literature and poetry had lured him from infancy; but inspiration was gone. A stronger nature perhaps could have surmounted this, but all boys are not made of the stuff men are made of and so this gentle lad, crushed in spirit gave up the good fight and took what comfort he could get from the fruit of the vine. Though death has written finis on his life's story, a faithful group of friends still cite his virtues and speak in glowing terms of his talents and charm. Though he could not ascend the heights he had mapped out for himself, he inspired those with whom he came in contact, and I feel that his life was worth while indeed since he is loved and respected by all who knew him and who worshipped him as a friend while he lived.

The above story came my way about a year ago when I responded to a call from Miss Frances Dorrance to give my services at a rummage sale for the Wilkes-Barre Geological and Historical Society. A man came in to claim a victrola he had bought for his cottage at Harvey's Lake, and he became interested in some books we had just received. As he browsed around, he mentioned a book about the Johnstown flood that he had seen in an antique shop somewhere in upper New York State, where he had been fortunate in picking up a valuable old book for a few cents. His mentioning the flood-book startled me, and I told him I was writing one on the same subject for my children. He then told me of his friend Bob. The story thrilled me more than he knew, and when he had finished telling it to Miss Kaehlen (of the Historical Society's staff) and

me, I said I would like to add it to my pages. He seemed surprised but was most gracious when I asked for details. He was a very interesting talker and if the story is not gripping to my readers, I fear I have failed to "put it over" as well as he did.

## CHAPTER X

### WATER TAKES ITS TOLL

The Philadelphia Record published a story on the front page of the second section of its edition of June 1, 1934, entitled "Johnstown Stifles a Memory," meaning that the 45th Anniversary of that disaster was passing without any special commemoration of it. It also carried two pictures. One had been taken immediately after the flood, and the other was an airplane view of the present Johnstown. Both pictures were very interesting to me. The first was taken from the corner of Main and Jackson Streets through Clinton Street. It showed the ground where our home had stood and the vacant lot where our store had been. Before this flood such a picture could not have been taken, because the four streets pictured here were all built up solidly with stores and homes. The airplane view is splendid, and shows how well we have builded since that catastrophe. The Presbyterian Church, a beautiful edifice at the corner of Walnut and Lincoln Streets, stands out in bold relief. It is built on the site of the former home of Colonel and Mrs. Jacob M. Campbell, the latter a friend of my mother. This house which withstood the flood, was on the style of the Sterling residence on South River Street, Wilkes-Barre, both having the wrought iron porches, same style roofs and other similar features. Campbell's house was a haven for many sufferers during and after the rush of the flood. On Main Street near this location lived the Charles S. Price family, very dear friends

of ours. On the day of the flood Mrs. Price was entertaining her sister, Fanny Haws, who at the time made her home with another married sister, Mrs. Robert Nixon, at Woodvale, whose husband was out of town on that day.

The rising water in the street soon entered the Price home, and they were forced to move up story by story until they reached the top floor, when the full force of the flood struck the town. As their home was of frame construction, they abandoned it for the brick home of Frank Hay, their neighbor. With their young son Philip and a nurse girl they crawled over the debris now piled up against their home and succeeded in getting into the second story window.

By this time the water had risen so high that Mr. Price, who was not familiar with the house, had to swim around hunting the third floor stairway, all the while dodging floating furniture. He finally reached the stairs and rapidly made his way up just as the water rose to the third floor level. All night long the refugees in this building had to listen to weird noises at irregular intervals, as the water-soaked bricks loosened and dropped out one or two at a time. Toward morning one end of the house fell out, and all those who were huddled in that portion of it were lost. My friends were saved, however.

Mrs. Nixon, sister of Mrs. Price, and her three children were drowned in their home. Very few people living in Woodvale escaped.

It sounds paradoxical to say that any one could have been fortunate in visiting in Johnstown on that day, but as you see that was really true for Miss Fanny Haws. She married Herbert Morris of Philadelphia some time later and lived in that city and at Lake George, New York, until her death a few years ago. Both her children are married; Hannah married Charles

Crouse and lives on Westmont, Johnstown, and Galloway married Edna Boyd and lives in Philadelphia.

Helen F. Price, mentioned in the foreword of this book, is a daughter of the late Charles S. Price, (also mentioned in the foreword) and his wife, Sara Haws Price. Recently I saw a newspaper containing a likeness of a picture Helen painted of Mrs. Richard Johnson, which she called "Portrait of Margaret." It is nearly life-size; and judging from the paper, it is lovely. This picture was in the spring exhibit of the "Salons of America in Radio City," from April 9th to May 6, 1934, in New York City. I am very proud of a friend who without the stimulus of necessity has not only achieved honors in the field of literature, but whose talents have led her to create beauty in the fine art of painting.

In the Hay home, when the Prices entered it, were the father, Frank Worley Hay, his wife, Eliza and their sons, Harry M. and Frank R. Hay. Their daughter and sister Ida M. Hay had been married in 1880 to Harry Endsley a young lawyer of Somerset, Pennsylvania, where they went to reside. Mr. Endsley's sister, Anna, married Abner McKinley, brother of our martyred president, William McKinley. The McKinleys with their daughter Mabel (later Mrs. Hermanus Baer) spent much of their time in Somerset at their country home, where they entertained the President and his wife on several occasions. The only time I ever saw William McKinley was when Mrs. McKinley and the President were going through Johnstown on their way to Somerset to visit his brother. There was something kind and fine in their hearts which was reflected in their countenances. Before the train pulled out I saw the President, at the suggestion of his wife, take a carnation from the lapel of his coat, and give it to a little child whose father's grimy hands held the baby up to

see the President. The mental gaiety which this gesture produced in the crowd gathered about the car was shared by the McKinleys, who seemed thrilled to see the little child reach for the pretty flower. I thought then and have ever since thought that the carnation would surely be pressed in the family Bible for a keepsake. When I was young I remember many fern leaves and roses preserved in this way. But this is beside my story. In 1888 Mrs. Endsley's father had the house she had been married in razed to make way for a handsome new brick one.

This was the house the Prices had sought rescue in after the flood. As I told you in the foregoing sketch it had withstood the flood although very badly damaged, for not only did the corner fall out, but a box car loaded with grain came down from Conemaugh (three miles away) and was driven through a large circular window in the dining room. All the ground floor furnishings and tapestries were ruined. The property loss was very heavy. The family with their neighbors and Mrs. John Dibert, wife of a prominent banker who was rescued and given shelter in the Hay home were all saved. Mr. Dibert was killed as his spacious home collapsed. It was demolished by the flood. Beside Mr. Dibert, his daughter, wife of Walter Weaver and their child and Mrs. Dibert's daughter Blanche, were all lost.

As soon as possible after the flood Mrs. Endsley had her parents go to Somerset where they stayed with her until there was some semblance of order restored in their home town. Some years after this the Endsleys moved to Johnstown where Mr. Endsley practised his profession. He later became solicitor for the Cambria Steel Company which position he held for many years.

The family was received most graciously in Johnstown and are highly esteemed as neighbors and friends.

After Mrs. Endsley's father died the heirs sold this homestead, and it was eventually acquired by Michael Boyle and Thomas Holzman who tore it down and erected upon the site the popular Majestic theatre which stands there today. Michael Boyle is a brother of the present bishop of Pittsburgh, the Most Reverend Hugh C. Boyle. Bishop Boyle and my husband were classmates for four years at St. Vincent College, Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Having been away at school in May, 1889, preserved Bishop Boyle from the fate that befell his father and the other members of his family who met death in the flood.

Mrs. Boyle, mother of the bishop was thrown into the water when her house went down. She managed to hold on to some floating object for awhile. Later she lodged in the roots of a great tree and her long hair became fastened among them and she was pulled and dragged along by the hair. The tree kept rolling around in the current so that she was under water half of the time. Fortunately, this tree then drifted close to the edge of a hill at Lockport near Bolivar, Pennsylvania, and a crowd on the bank managed to pull it on shore. The unconscious form of this woman was then released from the tree trunk and after much care these people had the satisfaction of seeing life return. In time she grew stronger and eventually was entirely restored to her former good health. She spent the remainder of her life in the interest of her two sons, who with her were the only survivors of a large family.

Mr. Peter Carpenter was a well known young man at the time of the flood. He was active in business and one of his interests was a restaurant which was a popular place for sea foods. Another interest which I think could be called a hobby was his string of ponies. He had seventeen at the time. As the streets were flooded,

Mr. Carpenter took fifteen of these ponies to the hill. Two spotted ones he put in Ludwig's stable in the rear of their home on Main Street, nearly opposite to where I lived. Two small ones he left in Mrs. Dave Costlow's summer kitchen. He tied one to the door knob for safe keeping. Mr. Carpenter was on horseback. The fire bell rang and he started for the hill, realizing that this was a warning. As he got to the corner of Main and Jackson Streets where our house stood he met Charley Mitchell and Dorsey King and he advised them to seek safety on the hill. By this time the streets were jammed with people and wreckage was floating by and the rain and darkness brought such gloom that Mr. Carpenter thought the end of the world had come. He galloped up to Adams street where he left his horse. He ran down the alley to Ludwig's stable and untied his two spotted ponies and his faithful dog and rushed with them to the hill. The only pony he lost was the little one tied to the door knob. The other one in the summer kitchen floated away and was rescued. As Mr. Carpenter reached the hill he watched the great flood burst through the narrow valley and plunge furiously through the town taking its terrible toll. That night from this vantage point he saw St. John's Church and Foster's house burn, and also saw the great fire at the stone bridge. The next morning at daybreak Fred LaFrantz and he came down to see if Mr. Carpenter's family was safe. The house had floated off the foundation and was in the middle of the street. Many of the houses in the neighborhood were crushed but theirs did not collapse. His grandmother's house across the street was turned over on its side but two daughters and she lived to tell the tale. They were indeed a fortunate family. Mr. Carpenter's restaurant was next door (across the alley) to the Methodist Church parsonage

on Franklin Street. The frame structure was lifted up and carried down to the end of Walnut Street, and lodged on the river bank, the worse for the ride, you may be sure. The next day Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Will McClain were doing some rescue work and later rowed over to the ruin of this building. The window of Mr. Carpenter's upstairs room was open and he looked in. The water was a few inches below the sill and there in full view he saw his pocketbook floating around. He fished it out, and found the contents, eighteen hundred dollars, safe. The banks were closed on Memorial Day and also on the day of the flood so he could not deposit his cash. After the water receded he made a further search and found his money bag containing fifty-six dollars in silver change and the money drawer with thirteen dollars intact. With this amount Mr. Carpenter felt rich and was enabled to start in business anew without any relief aid. The wallet he has kept as a precious relic. Mr. Carpenter has retired and lives on Southmont. He owned and laid out Carpenter Park, which was recently mentioned by Col. E. G. Smith in his "Parting Shots" in the Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader. He is the owner of the Capitol Hotel, which was built originally for the officials of the Cambria Iron Company and was known as the Cambria Club House. This structure suffered terribly by the flood, but was braced up and rebuilt. It may be interesting to note here that Johnstown proper was filled up to the depth of several feet after the catastrophe and what was at one time the ground floor of the Cambria Club House is now a sub-basement. One enters a small shop there by descending five or six steps. I think this is the only building in town to retain the evidence of the original street level. The Frank Hay homestead too was lower than the present level, but that was

changed when the Majestic Theatre was built. Many years ago this theatre was on the Keith circuit. At one time the head-liner was "Millionaire for a Day" John J. "Butch" McDevitt of Wilkes-Barre. Two young men took my sister and me to see this novel attraction. Mr. McDevitt made a speech (which was his act), to a crowded house.

## CHAPTER XI

### INDUSTRY CANNOT DIE

This next story tells of the experience of Mr. Frederick Krebs, president of the Johnstown Savings Bank, and his family. Mr. Krebs is the father of Walter W. Krebs, president and editor of the Johnstown Tribune. I am indebted to these two friends for the details of this account. Mr. Krebs' story is most interesting to me because it deals not only with his household but with one of the departments of our great mill.

On the morning of the fateful thirty-first of May, after a five inch rainfall, and in spite of the fact that the lower end of the town was under water, Mr. Krebs reported at the Gautier department of the Cambria Steel Mill. He was superintendent of this department at the time. When he arrived he found huge masses of sand and gravel on the street which had been washed down from the hillside in Conemaugh borough, and which obstructed the tracks of the Johnstown Passenger Railway which was operated by horse power. He and other passengers left the car and walked to the mill yard.

The streams continued to rise so that about ten o'clock Mr. Krebs ordered the rolling mill to roll what steel was in the heating furnace and then close down. He instructed all hands to go home and look after their families. When he left at twelve o'clock all the men had gone excepting the faithful watchman, Martin Fox, father of the present assistant cashier of the United States National Bank. When Mr. Krebs urged him to

go home, he pointed to the roof of the building, indicating he could seek refuge there. When Mr. Krebs arrived at his home he found a bountiful dinner prepared in honor of Dr. Harriet Jones of Terra Alta, West Virginia, a cousin of Mrs. Krebs. As they sat down to eat Mr. Krebs said: "Enjoy this meal, it may be a long time before we will sit down to such a dinner." It was said as a pleasantry but it proved prophetic. At one o'clock, Mr. Krebs found it impossible to return to the Gautier Works. The Stonycreek separating Kernville and Johnstown had overflowed its banks, and the water was rushing down Morris Street (at the time the Kernville side of Franklin Street was called Morris Street. Both sides are now called Franklin Street). By three o'clock Napoleon Street was under water, one venturesome explorer paddling around in a skiff. The first floor of the Krebs house was about six feet above street level. The water continued to rise until it reached the last step leading to the front porch. This thought fills me with horror now. If such a condition arose here in Wilkes-Barre it would mean that the river would be over the entire city with water about six feet deep in our home. Imagine this state of affairs; and the worst yet to come! And you will have some idea of the magnitude of the disaster at Johnstown.

As Mr. Krebs looked out on this he remarked: "When the water rises to the level of the last step, we will take up the carpets and remove the light furniture." Here let us pause for a moment and think. My thoughts lead me to believe that every minute my townspeople felt that the rain would cease, and the water would gradually recede. As Mr. Krebs stood at the door watching this water, Mr. John H. Young, on a porch on the opposite side of the street suddenly cried out: "Mr. Krebs, there goes Gautier." There was a mighty crash and roar and looking up toward the mills (which

were about a mile away, diagonally across the river and town from this point) they saw a cloud of smoke and dust over the works. As the mills and town were served with natural gas, Mr. Krebs cried out: "A gas explosion! Turn off the gas in the house." He barely had time to turn off the gas in the open fire place in the hall when he saw a huge wave of water rolling up the street. "To the attic," he shouted. He and his family had just time to call the maid who was sitting in the kitchen nursing a toothache. Someone picked up a little kitten which was lying before the open fire, and by that time the waters rushed up the stairs after them. Then they realized the South Fork dam had failed.

Through the attic window Mr. and Mrs. Krebs and Dr. Jones saw the water form a great whirlpool after the first rebound against the stone bridge, the arches of which were completely obstructed by the mass of debris. Brick houses melted away beneath the water. A large skating rink whirled up and then down stream. A young woman standing on a floating roof was singing a hymn as she was carried away to her doom. A small house was pushed up Napoleon Street, the occupants, the Pike family, clinging to the window sills. All were drowned. Mr. Folson, on the opposite side of the street, standing on the roof of his house, was frantically struggling to pull his wife through the upper sash of the window. The water was up to Mrs. Folsom's shoulders when Mr. Folsom finally succeeded in drawing her up to him. On an adjoining roof a young woman was hysterically praying for help. Other houses moving up Napoleon Street soon produced a jam of debris. All these houses were now moving on the crest of the back waters, which kept rising until part of the embankment leading to the stone bridge gave way. This allowed the flood to rush down the natural course of the river, and within an hour the water had fallen

so that the Krebs family found they could descend to their second floor which was under about eighteen inches of water.

All movement of wrecked houses ceased. In the street in front of the Krebs home was jammed the steeple of the Episcopal Church from Locust Street. It had crossed the town and Stonycreek and floated up several squares before it lodged there. A large dwelling house and an old log barn were packed in the street at this point. The water had scarcely settled when there emerged from this barn the cheerful crow of a rooster and the cackle of a hen. Back of the Krebs home the house of the venerable John White from Vine Street was stranded. Across the alley the MacClay house from Main Street found a resting place. These houses had crossed the town and Stonycreek before breaking up in the vicinity of the Krebs home on the lower end of Napoleon Street. The houses were crowded so closely together that it was possible to climb from roof to roof. A roving party, including Mr. John Hamilton, Cambria Iron Company "rigger" and Mr. Harry Shields rescued Mr. White and brought him into the Krebs home.

As darkness set in Mr. and Mrs. Krebs and Dr. Jones from their attic window saw the fire break through the roof of St. John's Church. They saw the flames creep up the steeple which burned fiercely and then toppled over on the rectory and Foster's house next door. This I described in an earlier chapter. At the same time, the sky was reddened in the direction of the stone bridge and these people felt they were confronted with a new and horrible danger, that of perishing by fire. Happily for them the fire was confined to the area around the bridge. In the morning this family found it possible to reach their first floor. It was covered with about eighteen inches of a mud deposit or

silt. A door leading from the porch to the dining room had been wrenched off its hinges. In the center of the room lay the body of a little two year old boy. Across the picket fence in the front yard hung the corpse of a woman. A freight car loaded with miscellaneous merchandise lay within a foot of the corner of the house. Early in the morning by the aid of volunteers from Kernville, the Krebs family and those in their care were able to leave their home. They clambered over roofs and used a raft to reach Kernville hill which was about a city block away from their property. Here they found shelter for the women. The first gruesome sight they saw was members of a family of eight lying side by side near the Millcreek Road. In contrast they saw Mr. Gomer Walters (Mrs. Kreb's oldest brother) chasing and catching a couple of stray chickens, "Aw-wa" as "Amos" would say, which he delivered to their temporary stopping place. From a telephone station on the hillside, maintained in connection with the natural gas line came a call from Greensburg. The speaker, chairman of a relief committee hastily organized in Pittsburgh, wanted to get in touch with Mr. Joseph Morgan, chief engineer of the Cambria Iron Company (father of Ellen Eyre Morgan Marshall, now famous pianist of New York City, who taught music to my sisters Eulalia and Rosemary, before she married and left Johnstown) for the purpose of getting some information regarding the extent of the disaster. Mr. Krebs gave a brief description of the scene as he saw it from the hill and informed the questioner that what was most urgently needed was food, clothing and coffins.

The Gautier Steel Mills were in the direct path of the mighty force of destruction. The buildings were of steel skeleton construction with wooden sheathing. The released waters of the broken South Fork Dam pushed

a solid mass of trees, houses, railroad cars, engines and debris before it, striking the mill with such force that the steel beams and struts were twisted into a tangled mass like a huge ball of wire. Nothing was left of the mills and machinery except the foundation, rolling mill housings and heavy parts of the engines. One of the steam boilers was found near Kernville Hill in the lower part of the town. The body of Martin Fox was found in the Stonycreek near the Kernville Bridge ten days after the flood.

Among the prominent business men who helped to direct the work of cleaning up the town was Arthur J. Moxham, acting mayor, cousin of Evan M. du Pont. In 1889 he was the head of the Johnson Company Steel Mills at Moxham, a flourishing suburb named in his honor. At one time Tom L. Johnson (also a relation of Evan du Pont) of single tax fame, later conspicuous as the mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, was the head of this mill which was named for his family. Still later T. Coleman du Pont headed this same mill which is not and never was connected with the Cambria Mills. There was a time when the mills at Moxham employed about seven thousand men most of whom with their families lived at Moxham. This mill was later called the Lorain Steel Company. The Cambria Mills employed about seventeen thousand men during the years of their greatest prosperity.

Mr. Krebs, working with Mr. Moxham, organized a small force of the employees of the Gautier department who had survived the flood. They worked with such a will under the most distressing conditions at home (many having lost their all) that the first rolling mill was put into order ten weeks after it had been destroyed.

On the evening of a day about the middle of August, Mr. John Bergman, boss roller of the 9" mill reported

to Mr. Krebs that his mill was ready and could start the next morning. "Are your furnaces fired up? Are the billets ready to be charged?" Mr. Krebs asked. "Yes," was the reply. "Then we will start tonight," said Mr. Krebs. "Get your crew ready to report after supper." After seeing that these orders were being carried out, Mr. Krebs went home. He returned an hour later and as he approached the mill, he saw the flames leap from the stacks of the heating furnaces.

There was no roof over the mill, and he heard the rattling of the revolving rolls. A crowd of men, women and children stood about in excited expectation. As he pushed his way through the crowd, a woman held up a small baby to him and said: "Mr. Krebs, this is a flood baby." Just as he got to the boss-roller's side a red hot bar passed through the finishing rolls amid the cheers of the crowd. It was a picture to be remembered. The stars shining above, the flames leaping up toward the sky, red hot steel bars looking like great hissing serpents, passing through the rolls, a happy cheering crowd looking on. Courage and energy had set the wheels of industry spinning once again, and the crowd dispersed with hope riding high. The first mill of the Gautier works was in successful operation after the Great Flood.

## CHAPTER XII

### A CRUEL FATE

In April of 1889 a new minister arrived at Johnstown to serve the German Lutheran Congregation. This important post had been vacant for some time and after much deliberation a man of superior ability in the person of Reverend Mr. Lichtenberg received and accepted the call. His wife and four children constituted his family circle. My parents with other neighbors greeted them in friendly fashion and welcomed them to Jackson Street, which is a very short one. As I look back it appears as a court-yard where one large family lived, and where the children roamed at will and played happily. The shadow of traffic was still far from the corner.

The German Lutheran property was a valuable one, with its church, a parsonage and a school building all in one large yard. The members had entered upon a new prosperity.

The minister and his family were warmly received by a sincere and gracious following, and the future looked rosy. I am sure this family was happy to be so comfortably situated.

What must have been their thought when just one month later the heavy rains raised the rivers and water flowed over the town and surrounded their home and imprisoned them!

Like all the wise and thrifty they carried all their household effects, including the carpets which had been tacked to the floors to the upper stories. From this

height they looked out upon the dismal scene below. What did they think when in the late afternoon the fire bell rang with a meaningless jangle and a whistle blew with a shrieking ferocity and children screamed and mobs fought their way through the deep water, past the home of these bewildered strangers? In the midst of this chaos a thundering noise soon spelled doom. On the west side of Jackson street where the Howes, Lichtenbergs, Gagebys, Zimmersmans and our family lived, the heavily freighted current sheared off every building to the rock surface; and every house paid its toll.

Of our new neighbors I picture to myself a group with eyes upturned to heaven, a prayer on each quivering lip, a living faith in each heart, as they joined hands and went through the Gates of Paradise together. Martyrs released to everlasting rest and peace.

The German Lutheran parish suffered the loss of two hundred of its members.

Reverend Mr. Lichtenberg was stationed at St. Paul's Lutheran Church at the corner of South Main and East South streets, Wilkes-Barre, from 1872 to 1878 and there are many people living in Wyoming Valley today who knew him and who remember this tragic story.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church was obliterated by the flood, and the rector Reverend Alonza P. Diller, his wife and their infant were drowned. Their bodies were recovered shortly after, near the spot where their home had stood. Mr. Diller was found with the baby firmly clasped in his one arm and in the other arm was the body of his wife.

The deceased rector belonged to the wealthy and influential Diller family of Lancaster, where he was stationed before taking charge of St. Mark's in 1884. His wife was the daughter of Dighton Morrell a prominent citizen of Henrietta, Pennsylvania.

## CHAPTER XIII

### TRAPPED

At five o'clock in the morning on the thirty-first of May, Mr. Peter Weitz noticed the back water of the streams creeping toward his home. He became alarmed as he realized it was rising faster than any yearly floods he had ever seen. He ordered a conveyance to take his wife and infant daughter Marie (Mrs. Frank Clark) to the Mansion House. When they reached this hotel they saw that it too was surrounded by water. The driver was then ordered to proceed up Locust Street to the hill. When Mr. Weitz saw his family taken care of he returned to his office in the Baltimore and Ohio depot. There he spent several hours moving his records to higher levels so that they would not be destroyed by any high water. While thus engaged he was startled to see yellow water spurting up through the cracks in the floor. He ran out of the building and jumped upon the elevated platform of the warehouse nearby. As he stood there he realized he was trapped. He then raced into this building which was of brick construction, one hundred and twenty feet long, with a slate roof. He dashed up a ladder to the rafters where he stored his old records on some planks.

Just as he reached this place the flood struck the building and a car standing on a siding crashed into one end of it. The building swayed and crumpled. The roof moved away like an ark with Mr. Weitz clinging to the rafters in the dark underneath. I pause here to think of his feelings at that moment.

Suddenly the roof ran up on some floating houses. This jarred Mr. Weitz from his perch and as the roof turned over slightly he saw the daylight and he managed to get on to the side of a building. He looked back and saw the roof take a nose dive into the muddy waters.

Just then his second place of refuge crashed into the Hotel Fitzharris, a brick building, which began to topple over. Mr. Weitz jumped for his life not noticing where, but landed on a freight car which carried him over Franklin Street in front of the Methodist Church which had withstood the flood. It is of stone construction and was practically new at the time and while it was in the very path of the flood it did not move. The interior of course was badly damaged. Near this church Mr. Weitz saw a large tree leaning out toward him, so he grasped one of the branches and made his way through the tree to the porch roof of the parsonage of this church and into an open window and ran to the third floor, where he helped to pull two men to safety. The next day he made his way by means of an improvised raft to the rear of the second floor of the Frazer building.

Here Mr. Weitz crawled through the rear window and made his way to a front window and stepped out onto the litter in Main Street. He picked his way up the street to where the Hulbert House had stood. With the aid of a few men he uncovered several bodies. Some of the arms and limbs of these victims were twitching as though they had died only a short time before. After this, Mr. Weitz worked his way slowly to the hillside where he and his wife and child had a very happy reunion.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FRAZER'S CORNER

The Frazer building mentioned in the foregoing sketch is of more than passing interest. On this site in the early days of Johnstown, Squire Douglas (father of Mrs. H. W. Storey of Johnstown, and grandfather of Attorney Douglas Storey of Carlisle and Harrisburg), conducted a store. His stock consisted of school bags, books, slates, pencils, a few patent medicines and other articles usually kept for sale in a general country store. In 1856 Caleb T. Frazer moved to Johnstown and purchased the good will and stock from Mr. Douglas. He then disposed of the stock, enlarged and improved the storeroom and established therein the first drug-store with prescription counter in Johnstown. January 13, 1867, the original building was reduced to ashes by a devastating fire, which threatened the young borough. This visitation stimulated the leading citizens into forming the Assistance Fire Company No. 1, to supplant to some extent the bucket-brigade which was willing but inadequate. The charter members of this first fire company were the following: Powell Stackhouse, Alexander Hamilton, O. N. Ramsey, Samuel McKeever, Robert N. Hunt, W. R. Jones, George F. Randolph, Robert Morris, James Eldridge, John E. Fry, George Fritz, D. N. Jones, Charles Kennedy, C. O. Luther, Richard Ryckman, Charles Butland, Alexander Montgomery and my father James Quinn. After the fire, Mr. Frazer bought from Thomas Gore the corner lot since known as Frazer's corner, and erected the pres-

ent substantial building. This store enjoyed the confidence of the community and a wide patronage. Mr. Frazer built a home on lower Main Street and removed his family from their home on Vine Street.

On the day of the flood, his daughter, Mrs. Ellis and her husband were in Pittsburgh, looking for a house, as Mr. Ellis had been transferred by his company to that city. As the water began to partially surround the Frazer home, Mr. Frazer and his wife became deeply concerned about the Ellis children in their home on the opposite side of the street. So Mr. Frazer crossed over and brought to his home his four grandchildren and the two maids. Shortly thereafter, the rising water entered the first floor, and this group, with Mr. and Mrs. Frazer and their two maids made their way to the second floor from which place they fled in terror to the attic, as the raging waters swept through the town. Here they listened to the splashing and grinding as house after house including their own was wrenched from its foundation, shattered, splintered and tossed beneath the engulfing waves.

Before dark some rescuers came along and helped these refugees to make their way over wreckage which blocked the street from house to house, and into a second story window of the Cambria Club House. Here they were cared for until the next day when they were taken from the same window and by way of skiff were rowed across part of the town and the swiftly flowing Conemaugh River to the Pennsylvania Railroad station and thence to Prospect Hill, where they found shelter with a friend.

The day following the flood Mr. Frazer's son Robert, a young lawyer who lived in Pittsburgh at the time, left that city with a number of detectives, policemen in citizens clothes, and men representing various charitable organizations. Upon arrival at the western

end of the stone bridge they found it with the debris stacked up sky-high and still a seething mass of flames. The train could go no farther and the passengers de-trained at this point and travelled around Kernville Hill to the Baltimore and Ohio overhead railroad bridge, which they crossed and then followed the tracks into town. At Clinton Street they were stopped by a guard. As they paused to look at the ruins draped with non-descript rubbish, and covered with dripping mud, the bell in the tower of the English Lutheran Church mournfully sounded the hour of nine. With bowed heads and heavy hearts these men returned to the hill-side where they spent a wretched, sleepless night in Hansman's Hall on Bedford Street. Here destitute sufferers huddled together, abject misery written on every tear-stained face, while a crowd of ruffians from the hills who had not been touched by the destroyer, swarmed in bent on adventure. They were drinking and carousing, making themselves generally obnoxious, until the detectives from Pittsburgh were forced to use severe tactics to clear the room of these heartless roisterers. Through the good graces of these sympathetic Pittsburgh visitors and to their credit let me say that order was quickly established and quiet prevailed until daybreak.

Hansman's Hall, in some way connected with Hansman's brewery, an old landmark, was near the house I was taken to when rescued. In the morning young Mr. Frazer wandered down Main Street again, determined to find some trace of his parents and the Ellis children, but as he told me, "very properly I was not permitted by a guard to enter what was left of my parents' home." He finally learned that both households had been saved and were on Prospect Hill. Of their earthly possessions they saved only the clothes they wore.

When the Frazer store building was renovated fol-

lowing the flood, Caleb T. Frazer had a marble slab built in the Main Street wall to show the height of the water, which was seventeen feet at that point, the very heart of the town.

A few years after the flood, and after more than thirty years spent in Johnstown Mr. Frazer sold his home and drug store to Charles Griffith, who conducted the same high class store that his predecessor had before him. The Frazers moved to Pittsburgh where their two daughters Mrs. Kate Brown and Mrs. Acsa Ellis and their son lived. This son, now Chief Justice Robert S. Frazer of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, a boyhood and lifelong friend of my parents, wrote me that his deceased sister's children and he still own this property.

Chief Justice Frazer retired January 1, 1936, after his twenty-one years of service on the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and he was succeeded as Chief Justice by another old friend, the Honorable John W. Kephart of Cambria County.

Thomas Gore who sold the corner lot to Caleb Frazer in 1856 was the father of Ella Gore, wife of Dr. James Swan Taylor, and grandfather of Amanda Mary Taylor, now married to Russell Leech, Congressman from Ebensburg, Pennsylvania and Washington, D. C. The day of the flood Mr. Gore's frame house on Locust Street near the Methodist Church floated off its foundation, swirled around in the current and gave the members of the household a memorable ride; before it settled on the opposite side of the street diagonally across from its original location. It did not break up and later it was rolled back to its own yard, braced up and renovated, and as far as I know is still giving service to tenants. Several years after the flood we were neighbors of Mr. Gore, who made his home in this house with his two daughters Mrs. Amanda M. Hutcheson,

a widow, and Mrs. Taylor and her husband and their small daughter mentioned above.

Mr. Gore belonged to the old school. In his broad brimmed black felt hat and long black cape he bore a striking resemblance to George Washington. His height, figure and features were the same and he was to all appearances made over the pattern of the famous George.

The winter after we moved to Locust Street we had a particularly heavy snowfall, and Mr. Gore became alarmed about the snow load on the roof of his house. Against the wishes of his daughters and Dr. Taylor, he took a snow-shovel and made his way to the roof, which is of peculiar style of construction, having some of the earmarks of the gable and some of the mansard-roof. For lack of better description let me say it has four sides rising up to a center ridge. Here in the midst of flying snowflakes Mr. Gore took his stand, knee deep in snow. For a man past sixty years of age he gave a remarkable demonstration of uniform strokes, as he worked the shovel to right and to left, like an oarsman steering his craft through rapids.

On looking up and seeing this figure silhouetted against the wintry sky, very little imagination was needed to see an action picture of Washington crossing the Delaware. The neighbors and passersby soon saw this and were awed by what appeared to be a vision of the "father of his country." As thrilling as was this spectacle, his family and friends were greatly relieved when he returned to his arm-chair in the sitting room.

He was a dear old man, quiet, dignified, a Presbyterian and deeply religious. He said evening prayers aloud in the family circle in which I found myself on several occasions, as I played with his granddaughter Amanda Mary, who was my junior by many years. I well remember these prayers, for I frequently dashed

away from my own home early in the evening to escape the rosary in mother's hand, only to be caught later by Mr. Gore with the King James version of the Bible open before him. After he bowed his head and said "let us pray" Amanda Mary and I had to keep silence for a few minutes which seemed to us like an eternity.

George Studeny, Jr. (brother of Frank Studeny—pronounced Stu'-den-y—the well known newspaper man, and at present Postmaster of Johnstown) in his late 'teens was caught by the flood. He managed to keep afloat by jumping from one moving object to another. He eventually landed about one hundred yards above the stone bridge. Here he sank in water up to his shoulder. He was pinned down with his arms at his sides. A two by four plank was firmly wedged between his body and his arms. There was a heavy log back of his head which forced his chin down on his chest. The pressure of the jammed wreckage prevented his moving. By this time the great fire had broken out at the bridge. Long, red shafts of flame were darting in and out of the congested mass. People along the hillside with ropes and boards worked frantically to rescue others who landed near the shore. Young Studeny saw this and decided to save his breath until an opportune moment might give him some chance of rescue. The water had now gone down several feet, but the raging fire was encroaching so that he suffered from the scorching heat. He then made one supreme effort to raise his head and at the same time he screamed for help. Fortunately two men heard his cries above the roar and crackling of the fire and with ropes and axes climbed out over the debris at the risk of their lives and chopped him free and got him away from the blistering heat and safely to the shore. Here they watched the fiery tongues of flame licking the very boards that had lately pinioned his body to the spot.

At about this time near the Jacob M. Campbell residence on Walnut Street a group of refugees on the roof of a house that had not floated away heard the mournful cries of a man nearby. They searched and found him wedged between two buildings. He could not extricate himself, because he dared not release his grip on the edge of the roof he was clinging to, for fear he would drop into the water out of which he had just raised his head. These men formed a human chain and thus the fellow was pulled to safety. He stood up and wiped his eyes, pressed the water out of his hair with the palms of his hands and sent it flying in all directions. Then he coughed, spat, shook himself like a mastiff that had just had a bath and with vehemence said: "This is a devil of a flood." Prayers had been more popular that day, but no one seemed to resent the first words of this poor fellow. As Satan has always done things on such a big scale I am inclined to think the fellow was entirely right.

May I add the experience of one more friend? A notable career carved by his own efforts and deserving honorable mention is that of Dr. Victor Heiser. He was left an orphan of tender years by the tragedy of the flood. He went to live with an uncle and aunt, Dr. and Mrs. Frank S. Schill of Jackson Street, neighbors of ours. They directed his education and encouraged him in his chosen profession of medicine. His rise to fame with the Rockefeller Foundation must have been a great source of satisfaction to his benefactors. I have read (as I am sure many of you have) articles in numerous pamphlets, magazines and papers in praise of his scientific work. I think all of Johnstown is justly proud of Victor Heiser.

One could write on indefinitely of the experiences of our townspeople. In the stories printed here I believe there is represented a cross section of the town as well as a cross section of neighbors and friends.

## CHAPTER XV

### RELIEF ARRIVES

A few weeks after the flood Governor Beaver of Pennsylvania appointed this Flood Relief Commission: Mayor Edwin H. Fitler, Robert C. Ogden, Francis B. Reeves, John Y. Huber, Thomas Dolan, all of Philadelphia, H. H. Cummin of Williamsport, James B. Scott, Reuben Miller and S. S. Marvin of Pittsburgh, and John S. Fulton, general manager of the Cambria Iron Company of Johnstown.

Some months after the flood mother was at a meeting with a group of women who were discussing ways and means of raising funds to build a temporary church when a late comer arrived and announced that she had just heard that the "Relief Commission" was going to give a thousand dollars to each flood widow. In the room were two women who had "ne'er-do-well" husbands. Quick as a flash one said to the other:

"Now, there is where we missed our chance; when we were all floating around holding on for our lives, we should have given our mates a little push. We would be rid of them, and have a thousand dollars to boot."

"That's right," said the other, "but on second thought, I could not conscientiously have taken that much for mine. I'd have to give five hundred back."

Thus did these cheerful souls help to buoy up the spirits of their co-workers, with wit and humor pervading the meetings. You may be sure their purpose was accomplished.

A few years later when this congregation was ready

to build its permanent church the contract was awarded to Beezer Brothers, Construction Engineers, Altoona. They erected the first steel frame ever used in Johnstown. As I look back and see it in perspective it reminds me of the churches the children now build with the famous erector sets. Construction work has a universal appeal as we all know, but this departure from the regulation form was a curiosity that daily drew old and young by the hundreds. An editor of an architectural magazine of that period (1895) wrote concerning St. John's church: "Constructively and artistically the design offers a great deal of interest. As far as we can recollect at this moment it is the only building of its kind in existence." To see the crane work with human like skill and precision; to see the derrick raise a long iron beam that swung around in mid-air with a man nonchalantly standing on it, gazing about; and then to see the beam ride into place at the mere gesture from his hand was something to make the most conservative gape, and catch his breath and hold it. So it happened that one day a group of school children heard two patriarchs on the side lines speak in this way:

"Mike, did you ever see the likes of this buildin', don't it beat Hell?" And Mike feeling somewhat superior, by right of having stood there longer, answered:

"Well, ain't that 'phwat they are puttin' it up for?"

This was about forty years ago. I have heard this story since, distorted to suit similar jokes, and all I can say is, if the Mike of my story did not originate it on the spot, he was at least a generation ahead of the others in getting it across.

A strange and interesting story which I read recently in a book published by the present parish of this same church, entitled "The Record of a Hundred Years" gives an account of its early struggles in Conemaugh Old Town. To come to the point at once, a small con-

gregation (about five families) and a lack of funds finally brought this church and the three trustees to the auction block in 1838. To quote from the book: "As far as can be determined, St. John Gaulbert's Church is the only Catholic church in the state of Pennsylvania to have been sold at sheriff sale." A lawyer named Daniel Stanard and his wife Anna of Indiana, Pennsylvania, bought it in and after ten years and the addition of eight more parishioners—the thirteen families who belonged were able to redeem it. The starting of the Cambria Iron Works in 1853 bolstered up the town, and from that time on bigger and better edifices were built by all denominations. One of the handsomest is the steel framed one described in this chapter. The outside walls are made of light brown iron-spot brick, laid in red mortar with terra-cotta trimmings. The roof which was beautiful was of red earthen Spanish tile laid in elastic cement. This unfortunately had to be changed a few years ago. Two towers point heavenward. The main one, one hundred and eighty feet high, is in imitation of the Italian Campanile at Venice, with an addition of a sculptural angel frieze around the top symbolizing Prayer, Humility, Aspiration, Hope and Music, which I think adds greatly to the dignity and beauty of this tower. The smaller one, one hundred and four feet high with a graceful dome with four lions atop of it is in imitation of the Choragic Monument of Lyscrates in Athens. It serves as a bell-tower and contains the re-cast bell that was badly dented in its fall when the old church burned the night of the great flood. Of the two gables, one on Clinton Street between the towers is surmounted by a beautifully carved statue of St. John Gaulbert and the one on Locust Street is adorned by an equally beautiful figure of St. Rose of Lima, the first American to be canonized as a saint. When this church was built, the trustees were Messrs.

John Hannan, John McDermott, Thomas Mathews, E. A. Barry, Harry Smith, and my father James Quinn.

To return to my story, the first relief money my father received as my share, he turned over to the three men who had rescued me. Every Fourth of July thereafter, Maxwell McAchren used to come to our store, where father enjoyed hearing him elaborate on his gallant deed. There was usually a five dollar bill forthcoming with which Maxwell celebrated. My father told me that on one of these occasions when Max was making one of his annual visits, he was telling father what a great day it was for him when he found me floating, and what a feeling of joy and love filled his heart as I put both my arms around his neck. At this point I said to father:

"You may tell Mr. McAchren for me the next time you see him that I said: 'When I am grown up and meet the man I love, and put my arms around his neck, I am sure his neck will never feel as fine to my arms as the burly, unshaven neck of Maxwell McAchren, the brave Scotchman who risked his life to save me from the greatest flood since Noah's!'"

Father laughed heartily and said:

"I shall surely tell it in your own words the first opportunity I have."

Father said when he told Maxwell this, the poor fellow could only weep at the thought. One of the regrets of my life is that I never saw him after the rescue.

Mother and father saw him often. He was a paper-hanger and painter, was married and the father of fifteen children.

A few years ago I saw the obituary notice of Maxwell McAchren in the Johnstown *Tribune* and noted the hour of the funeral from the home of his son Harvey on Somerset Street. You children remember this, I know. I called Malbranc, the florist, and told

him to send a bouquet of dark red roses to that address, and my sister Eulalia told me afterward that she went to the home out of respect for Max's saving me and she saw the roses. The family placed them on his casket and then she told them who she was, and one of the older children, a daughter, married and living in Pittsburgh, said she remembered her father had saved the little Quinn girl. Another regret is that Maxwell did not get the roses during his illness, of which I knew nothing. I wrote the family and received his picture from them, which I am very proud to own. The Leis and Metz families I saw often. I cannot recall anything which gave mother and father more genuine pleasure than when I asked to take gifts to these people, and they prepared the boxes and sent me on my way.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FINDING A HOME

After we had lived a year or two in the yellow house, a double frame dwelling was erected within a few feet of our tiny house. My parents were pleased to find a larger one available, and without ceremony we moved over the fence. The large stove used for cooking was taken see-saw fashion from the old kitchen to the new one, to the delight of the children in the neighborhood. Such sights were the moving pictures of our young days.

In the other half of this block lived a family that had lace curtains so long that they hung down and half way across the floor, so that visitors would have to play at hop-skotch in passing through to avoid walking upon the curtains.

The men in this house (which I think must have been a boarding house) all played brass horns and I remember how mother and father used to give each other the distress signal as these horns drowned out all the conversation on our side. That screeching music lingers with me still. Some time later we moved to a small single house at No. 535 Locust Street which looked palatial to us then. Naturally houses were at a premium. Through the friendship existing between my father and the owner Dr. Benjamin Yeagley who lived next door we were able to secure this coveted prize. It was the only brick house available in the town at the time. The rent was considered exorbitant, at fifty dollars a month; the average rental at the time was twenty-five or thirty dollars but we had to have more room as grandfather and later three cousins, Charles, Alice and

Norbert Schwartz from Salina, Kansas, came to live with us. A large room on the third floor helped, but we frequently slept three in a bed, and half the time there were cots in the room so that we never walked about without bumping our shins on some piece of furniture. This condition must have worried our parents, but we took everything as it came. In fact I distinctly remember taking advantage of the situation. It was a relief to me when the strict supervision we were accustomed to was somewhat relaxed on account of this calamity. It was sort of circus day every day to the younger ones who grew up a little like Topsy, while our busy elders were trying to establish themselves again in home and business.

The flood had changed the whole course of our lives. I think my older sisters suffered by the cruel change.

Ten months after the flood, Helen and Rosemary returned from Kansas and in September went to Seton Hill Academy at Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Later my three sisters went to St. Xavier's Academy, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, where Helen was graduated in 1895, the only graduate in the academic class that year.

As you have always been amused by the long name of the girl from Salina, Kansas, I must write it here, so it may be preserved for you. When Helen and Rosemary returned from the west, they told us the story of a woman who married quite late in life a man named Morrow. Some years after, a daughter was born. The in-laws, mostly maiden aunts, were overjoyed, and each wanted the baby named for her. There was much talk and many arguments, but finally with wisdom befitting Solomon the mother pleased them all, so the baby was called, "Anna, Mariah, Priscilla, Belinda, Clementine, Della, Pearl, Ella, Eliza Jane, Mary, Elizabeth, Frances Gardiner Morrow."

When my sisters came home and rattled this off in one breath, we used to go into near hysterics.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A POT OF GOLD

After the flood one of the great outdoor sports was hunting relics. Every yard would yield something if one had the energy to dig. We had plenty of that, and brought in all sorts of gadgets (apologies to Lowell Thomas). One day I dug up a collection of old coins, three cent pieces, half dimes, large pennies, white pennies, and some jewelry. Among the latter was a frosted gold shirt stud, set with a tiny diamond. Such relics were very common then. The pity of it is that none was preserved and I haven't one coin or the jewelry left as a souvenir.

Shortly after the flood, Henry Loebrick and another man, killed and dressed a sheep in what had been the cellar under Kimples' furniture store. When they finished this work they dug a hole to bury the offal. In the course of their digging they uncovered an earthenware crock very popular in those days for milk and butter. To their amazement they beheld a veritable gold mine! The crock contained six thousand five hundred dollars in gold. Mr. Kimple was lost and never found. His wife and family likewise had perished in the flood so there were no legal claimants for the money. There was great excitement in town over this find. The man who owned the ground and had been Mr. Kimple's landlord claimed it. A law suit followed and the court decided in favor of Mr. Loebrick. An old Scotchman by the name of William Macpherson had had a grocery store on this site long before Mr. Kimple had followed

him in the same building with a furniture store. Many people felt it was Macpherson's as he had the reputation of being able to check the flow of gold that came his way. Can you picture to yourself the miser as he dropped a coin weekly, perhaps daily into this crock? Perhaps he rubbed his hands and chuckled merrily as he clamped the lid down tight, and sneaked up the stairs all in a glow and with deep satisfaction as he thought of the "rainy day." It surely was a rainy day! I think, however, that the sententious maxim of saving for the rainy day should be restated so that the thrifty be advised to exercise care in the selection of a safer place.

Mr. Loebbrick was an undertaker and later he opened a furniture store on this site, where he combined the two trades. He invested in new funereal trappings including a hearse. So if the buried treasure was Mr. Kimple's gold, he paid for a hearse but never rode in one. As children we used to speculate pleasantly on the possible owner of this neat fortune and we usually ended by deciding it had belonged to an old German, who had a candy store and who did a thriving business as many school children had to pass his shop several times a day; the little bell over the door tinkling continuously at certain hours.

Years after this, workmen digging in the alley in the rear of our house on Locust Street, were finding gold coins in a trench they were making. This was noised about town. People came from the four points of the compass with picks, shovels, knives, forks, spoons, and every conceivable instrument for burrowing. This was delightful entertainment for us. We did some digging too, but found far more fun in watching others.

Women soon joined the men, and we never saw anything funnier than the sight of these women, sitting in the dirt scraping it on their laps, fairly caressing it, and then sifting it through their fingers, scanning every par-

ticle for gold. One man found ninety dollars, all others lesser sums. My sister, Marie, playing baseball in this district with a crowd of boys tripped over an old stove leg (which had been unearthed a few minutes before) while running to base, looked back to see what she had fallen over, saw a shining rim embedded in the rust. We all thought she had found a ring. When our cousin, Frank Foster dug it out for her, it proved to be a two and one-half dollar gold piece, which I think she has to this day (barring F. D. R.'s order for all gold). This spot was near and in a direct line with the crock found in the cellar.

Before I tell you my next story, I am sure you will want to know whether Aunt Abbie and Libby were found.

About a year after the flood, some young boys fishing in the river about nine miles below Johnstown at a place called Sang Hollow, uncovered a skeleton and in the ring on the finger was engraved: "To Abbie from John" and the date of their marriage.

Aunt Abbie was buried in our plot in the German cemetery in Geistown, next to my brother Vincent, and a weeping-willow tree planted over her grave. How we loved to look at that tree when we were young. I think the word "weeping" meant much to us as we thought of Uncle John, whom we so dearly loved, as the young husband bowed down with grief. The baby was never found.

Libby was engaged and wore a ring, the gift of her sweetheart. The poor fellow was frantic. He searched for her body, but in vain. Several months later, he found her ring on a hook in the morgue, with some other trinkets he had given her, and a hank of hair, with a card tersely stating, "Unidentified, buried in Unknown Plot, Grandview Cemetery." So he knew she had been found and after the strain of looking for her,

he was comforted to know she had been buried. Here with nearly eight hundred others she sleeps. In this plot there is a beautiful monument with life size figures of Faith, Hope and Charity. In the background radiating from the base of this heroic monument are the little white marble markers, stretching across the soft green lawn.

My mother with tears in her eyes told me that bodies found weeks after the flood had regular funerals but my brother's body found within a week was taken in a butcher's wagon to the cemetery, as it was the only available conveyance at the time.

Speaking of the cemetery reminds me of the hour before I was rescued. As I sat upon my raft and drifted around I saw at a distance flags and tombstones. This impressed me as I had often gone walking with a Miss Elizabeth Brown (Charley Martin's aunt) and her beau, Mr. Cleveland, to the cemetery on Sunday afternoons. When I told this as part of my experience, everyone doubted it, said I never could have floated so far up stream, so it was attributed to my imagination, which annoyed me not a little. However, months later in excavating for a grave in Sandyvale cemetery, my story was verified by the finding of packs of our children's copy-books, some forks with mother's initials, R. G. Q. and her napkin ring with her name engraved upon it, which we have to this day. The flags I had seen had been placed on the graves the day before, which was Memorial Day.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### NOT SO TRAGIC

Perhaps it is just as well to tell you something in lighter vein at this time. There were many laughable sights and situations, as there always are, frequently as close to sorrow and tragedy as darkness and dawn.

One ludicrous picture, Charles Replogle (brother of Leonard, of steel fame) told us he saw, as he and his parents and five brothers drifted about on their roof expecting death at any moment, a woman standing alone, balancing herself on a raft, going swiftly downstream somewhat like surf board riding, all the while rolling her hair up, taking one pin after the other out of her mouth in the approved fashion and sticking one after the other in her knot on the top of her head. Those were the days of steady nerves, when one reached for a hair pin instead of a "lucky."

Then too, supposing your family was saved and you all met unexpectedly and exchanged warm greetings, and you found your timid little mother in a policeman's uniform, and your father wearing a skirt with ruffles to his knees, and the children dressed like supers in an amateur performance of Hamlet. I think the corners of your mouth would turn up in spite of everything to weigh them down.

Another amusing story was that of a German coal miner, a long time resident of the city. With the thrift and industry of his nationality he had acquired a comfortable home, in the First Ward, wherein was domiciled his family of nine. The rising flood waters of

the rivers imprisoned them in the early morning, preventing escape to higher ground.

The family cow with her calf (a few weeks old) occupied the stable in the rear of the home. With great anxiety and no little labor Calfy was brought to the kitchen pantry for refuge.

As minutes passed and the flood waters continued to rise, the family was forced to the second floor, Calfy being taken along for safety. A pen for the saucer-eyed, long-legged little animal was improvised by opening the hall door and bracing it with a new pickhandle against the stair bannister. The onrush of the huge wave of water let loose by the broken South Fork Dam drove the family to the roof of the house. This time there was only opportunity for saving themselves. Virtually everything movable on the second floor, including Calfy, was washed out into the waste of water.

"Oh-oh-oh, Poppy, look! Look, our little calf," cried out a young daughter of the family.

"Yah, yah, Minnie," was Daddy's solemn response.  
"Yah, yah, Minnie. Un my new pick handle."

Not less amusing was the story of the recently arrived Welshman from the old country, temporarily residing with his elder brother on Lincoln Street, First Ward. They found refuge on the roof, where they remained all night through the continued rainfall, without shelter, sparsely clad, and entirely without food. Towards morning in the midst of this indescribable desolation, the immigrant young fellow quietly asked the elder brother: "Can't you slip down to the kitchen and get me a cup of tea?"

At the time of the flood the family horse of a Vine Street resident was in the stable in the rear of the home. It was found two days later comfortably resting in the haymow. The wave rush of water evidently floated him to a higher elevation, thus sparing his life. Fol-

lowing a generous feed of oats, Dobbin was soon himself and lived for further service to his owner, which is a nice ending to this little story.

The Vine Street home and office of Dr. Walter Winston Walters was removed from its foundation, the first story being badly damaged, while the office furniture, medicine cabinet and surgical instruments were destroyed. The floating debris of other buildings piled against the structure thereby preventing further collapse threatened by loss of the first story support. Forty-seven persons, men, women and children, found a refuge for the night in the third story of this home. Not until daylight again arrived was disclosed the jumble of humanity that had a dry roof overhead and comfort of sympathetic companionship. The resultant requests and demands for the doctor's services were met by Dr. Walters and his wife, who furnished such treatment as could be improvised with no medicine available. Daylight enabled many to leave their refuge to seek help. Others remained until the following day. The final departure of all refugees disclosed a nondescript collection of clothing, shoes, hats, ribbons, a crutch, a currycomb and a good set of upper teeth, all left behind in the scramble to seek home, relatives and friends.

The physician's family and close relatives numbered eighty-five persons, all widely scattered in the flood area, namely: in Woodvale, Kernville and First Ward. Not one life was lost out of the entire group, although one member was an invalid confined to a wheel-chair.

A woman resident of Walnut Street, who was absent from her home on the day of the flood, learned that her house was washed away. She was agreeably surprised to be informed later that the house and its furnishings had escaped destruction and was resting on her sister's lot in Kernville. A bird's eye survey disclosed that the probable journey of the house swept by

the various counter currents of the deluge of water was a distance of fully one-half mile.

Some days after the flood when people began to think again, and things were being looked for in the hope of retrieving some treasure, grandfather Geis began worrying about some valuable papers he had lost, and the dear old fellow in broken English kept saying over and over:

"If I could only find my 'beerow,'" meaning his bureau.

Grandmother said: "John Geis, how can you speak of such things after this terrible disaster, when we have lost everything? How can you say anything but thank God, who has seen fit to spare us when so many younger and stronger were taken?"

Grandmother was very religious, but grandfather was a business man and his mind was on his material losses, which were very great. He kept lamenting about his 'beerow' until he finally got some men interested enough to dig in the street, where he had been pulled out, and believe it or not his bureau was found imbedded in mud, and his valuable papers were intact in a drawer. The bureau properly speaking was a handsome maple high-boy.

He carried his papers to the hill and laid them out in the sunshine on the grass to dry. A sudden gust of wind came along and they flew up in the air and swirled around in all directions. To appreciate this fully one really should have known grandfather. He was thin, nimble, and very active. He lost no time in calling his grandchildren and others who were fleet of foot. They all joined him in the chase which was like trying to catch a flying derby on a modern street, in a wind storm. You may imagine the gymnastics, before the last leaflet was safely tucked away in his coat pocket beside his throbbing heart.

This amusing little story was told to my cousin, Mary Foster Smith, by an old friend, Elizabeth Lonny Freed Caldwell who now lives at Armagh, Pennsylvania.

She, a tiny woman, and her husband, Jacob (son of Dr. Caldwell) over six feet tall, fled to their attic as the house moved away with the flood. Here they looked out on death and destruction. Suddenly their position became extremely perilous and they both leaped out of the window "with the greatest of ease" like "the daring young man on the flying trapeze." They landed far below on some boards. They soon found these unsafe so they jumped to a house that was slowly drifting by. They kept jumping from one thing to another until they finally reached the rear of John Thomas' general store. Here they were pulled into this building by some men. During the time our friend was doing her "jumping stunt" as she called it, a branch of a tree caught the slit in the back of her bright red dress and ripped it apart so that it was flying in all directions unknown of course to the distracted woman. In her anguish she paced up and down in the third floor of this store room not knowing as she said "whether I was in heaven or hades." A cousin of hers, rescued and in the same building, asked her what happened to her clothes. She backed up to a mirror and there beheld her dress in shreds, and in full view her long brown bustle which at the time was called a "tilter." She was "covered with confusion" as only the dear women of that period could be with such an exposure. But let her use her own words to my cousin in relating this episode. "Some other nudists pinned me up and 'I wonder now, why?' as Chic Sales would say. Did I take the tilter off? No, I wore it for a week up in Somerset County and saved it until I arrived home with my mother and brother."

Having been born in the eighties and having lived through the gay nineties, I have a tender sympathy for

this woman. I think this story delicious and I am glad to know that she and her husband and their friends have lived to enjoy it with expanding hilarity. I think it adds charm to her personally when we realize that even the horrors of that day were eclipsed for a few seconds as the mortified "nudists pinned her up." I for one glory in her sustained pride.

Before I get away from this atmosphere let me express a thought by way of vindication for the much maligned years of my childhood. The "Gay Nineties" have long ceased to impress me as a dead decade. I look upon those years as the petticoat-conscious period in which the female of the species after a long Victorian sleep, roused herself to a sense of broader fields of endeavor, and wrenched herself loose from the lavender and old lace minuet tempo of her times to a fast and furious tango of freedom in which we are all still whirling.

## CHAPTER XIX

### POTPOURRI

Shortly after the flood, the curious came in swarms and droves. There was just one entrance to the town at the time from the west. This was over the stone bridge and a wide plank bridged the gap at the eastern end of it where the water had cut through. Soldiers were stationed there to keep idlers out. On the bridge were hundreds of coffins brought from Pittsburgh, waiting to be transported to the town.

The soldiers would not allow anyone to enter unless he had some business there. So it wasn't long until some one thought of the coffins, and if you wanted to get into town the ruse was to carry a coffin. It worked very well, as you may imagine, for thousands of people came to see the place and old and young who entered at that point carried the prescribed passport, which was unique to say the least. Many friends have described this ghastly parade to me in detail.

The souvenir hunters were busy the week following the flood. One crowd saw a peg-leg sticking out of the wreckage and a stalky young fellow said: "Well, this will be a wonderful souvenir for me," so he tugged away and pulled, but all to no avail so his friends joined him in digging down and separating the tangled mass of rubbish, when they discovered that a man was tied to the leg or the leg was tied to a man. They hurriedly got the body out and found it was a notorious inebriate familiarly called "Old Seppel" which is a nickname (German) and not one of great respect for the name Joseph.

The Hulbert House, diagonally across the street from our store lost fifty people, only five escaping when the building went down. This was the heaviest toll, I think, for any one building in the town.

Years ago Grandfather Geis owned the lot this hotel was on, and sold it at a handsome profit to Conrad Suppes (pronounced Soup'-s) who owned it for a life time. At his death his son George inherited it; and strange to say, later sold it for a handsomer profit to my Uncle Louis Geis, whose furniture and carpet store is now at that location.

Near the Hulbert House was the hotel owned by John J. Hornick. It floated across the street and was wrecked, but Mr. Hornick his wife and her sister and the four Hornick children, Lee, Margaret, Albert and Angie were rescued.

In our house that went in the flood were many lovely things mother cherished for different reasons. One was a small oil portrait of her first daughter, Florence which was the only one extant. This cherub with blue eyes and golden ringlets was a little angel to us.

There were other things which never could be replaced, such as a marble clock and urns to match, a handsome silk shawl, gifts from her brother William, which he purchased in Germany when he made his first trip over there. The new piano (square-,) her jewelry, and everything near and dear to a woman's heart were gone.

This reminds me of another loss. Father, as a young man in his early 'teens, aspired to be an artist. The family exchequer at that time being taxed by twelve members, found materials too costly so he had to be content with house paint which he managed to acquire and with a few brushes, I imagine unworthy of the name, he retired to the attic of his home, and there made a copy of "Rebecca at the Well." I have only a hazy

recollection of its standing in our third floor, with the organ and other objects of art which did not "make the grade" on the first floor of our new home. We loved this picture partly because of its bright colors, but mostly because our father had painted it. How we should love it as a souvenir of his first artistic efforts! I remember hearing mother many years after the flood, teasingly telling father "the flood wasn't so bad, when you realize we got rid of Rebecca so gracefully."

She often spoke of what a blessing it was for all concerned that she was away during the flood. She said if she had been home, she never would have gone out of our house, but would have stood on the porch and invited every human being running to the hill to come in, as she had done many times before when the rivers overflowed their banks. We all knew this only too well, and so felt our lot might have been ever so much worse and we really had much for which to be thankful.

As time went on, in a child's world we were having rather pleasant experiences. My sister, Eulalia, who was helping mother take care of our infant brother Tom, discovered there were many pennies in the pockets of little suits and dresses sent by thoughtful people throughout the country, and by our relations in particular. So she gathered as many as she could, and with them bought a little red express wagon. Tommy was a chubby child learning to walk. He had to be carried most of his waking hours for the lack of something to ride in, and so these pennies bought a veritable king's carriage as it appeared to us at the time and Tommy was hauled about to see the sights. Those who sent the small donations for sweets, meant for the little flood sufferers never knew about the penny express which was running long after the memory of the candy was forgotten.

Several months after the flood when the "clean up

squad" was assorting rubbish to be burned they uncovered a number of books that were imbedded in the mud. These were lying near the residence of Henry Y. Haws (father of my friend Lucy Haws, now Mrs. Russell Love) not far from the Johnstown side of the Stonycreek. In some of the ones that were best preserved my father's name could easily be discerned. Fortunately the men doing this work had some appreciation of relics and they reversed the usual order of things by showing wisdom before action. They sent word to my father who put on his "seven league boots" and was on the scene in a couple of strides. He identified the lot as part of his precious library. Books were not as plentiful in numbers then as they are now and my father was genuinely happy to recover these. With the aid of some friends they were carried to our temporary store. Later, they were re-bound. I remember well the many stains in them. It was not unusual for little flakes of yellow clay to drop out as one turned the pages. These books with the forks, a napkin-ring and the copy-books, spoken of in another chapter were the only things (I remember) recovered from our demolished home.

After the Relief Commission had distributed several millions of dollars, as equitably as was possible and the citizens of Johnstown were given a new start with the cash they had received, the relief money kept coming in from all parts of the world. This was then put in a fund and kept intact and in due time the Memorial Hospital of Johnstown was erected to serve its people and as a memorial to their dead. It is a monument to the forethought of our fellow citizens in thus providing for the needs of the community. It is also a lasting tribute to our friends abroad whose generosity made the building of it possible.

When I went to boarding school as we called it in the Gay Nineties, at Cresson, Pennsylvania (the same con-

vent my mother had attended forty years before when it was located at Loretto, Pennsylvania) I met Elizabeth Hughes, a girl from Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania. She was full of fun and very popular. She may have been serious later but not when I knew her; and we had much to do that was not taught at the convent, such as mid-night feasts, and mid-night parades when the entire faculty and student body were disturbed. One thing we did that relieved the tedium of our daily routine and brought keen amusement to the students in general and to us in particular was the dressing up in modern attire of the somber looking statue of St. Francis Xavier. It stood in a recess in the corridor at the head of the stairs near the entrance to the old chapel. At the time gay colored golf capes were the fashion. We used a bright plaid one (from Quinn's Store, Johnstown) to cover the shoulders and surplice of the saint. Upon his head we placed a merry-widow hat draped with a fine mesh black veil, with polka-dots. This veil we neatly pinned at the back of his neck. The hand of his outstretched arm held a wooden cross which we removed and in its place we laid a smart looking new pair of Englishmake tan sports gloves. To look upon this man with mustache and beard, mildly gazing out between the large polka-dots was the most mirth-provoking sight I had seen up to that time. As the line of students came along in single file the situation became hilarious, as each girl in turn saw this. There is no laugh so genuinely hearty as the one that bursts forth when silence is not only good manners, but is demanded. All these things were innocent enough in themselves, but very much out of order where discipline was necessary. So we were constantly "in the toils of the law." As we were "doing time" one day, Elizabeth asked me if I knew anything about the terrible flood in Johnstown years ago (it was about twelve years then). Well,

we certainly got chummy when I told her my story and she told me her father built all the "Hughes" houses which were shipped in and set up in our town. I had never known anything about them, or why they were so named and I was interested to find out.

Another friend at the academy at Cresson was Annie Elliot Foster (later Mrs. Berford Britton) daughter of Dr. D. G. Foster of Crafton, Pennsylvania, who responded to the first call for volunteers to serve the sick and injured in our town in 1889. He arrived in Johnstown, Saturday, June first, the day after the flood.

Let me add a few names of other physicians and surgeons from abroad who answered the call and who worked under the most trying conditions imaginable. From Pittsburgh came Dr. J. A. Oldshue, Dr. Thomas McCann, Dr. W. R. Stewart, and Dr. J. B. Grimes; and from Altoona, Drs. Buck, Findley, Bruner, Smith, Ross, Spanogle, Arney and Sellers. Dr. Jones came from Ebensburg. Later, Drs. Hewson, Jr., Sweet, and Shober came from Philadelphia and relieved the foregoing gentlemen. There were many others who helped.

These in turn were relieved by the Johnstown doctors who by this time had somewhat recovered from the shock and their losses. They took hold with a will and worked in the temporary hospitals that had been established by the visiting physicians, and by Miss Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross Society. The Cambria Hospital, a private concern owned by the steel company and situated high above the mills on Prospect Hill, was not adequate in this emergency, but it did more than its share.

The Sisters of Charity made homeless by the flood rendered valuable services at this hospital. Beside the other doctors mentioned in this book were these three Johnstowners, Drs. Sheridan, E. L. Miller and W. E. Mathews, who worked day and night in the most miser-

able surroundings, carrying hope and help to these suffering people. These three men had hairbreadth escapes but I have the details only of the experience of the last named which I learned recently from his daughter Ruth Rodgers.

Dr. Mathews had been trapped in his house and was in the thickest of the flood. He was flung about until he landed near the stone bridge. As the water went down and the wreckage settled, he climbed over it and made his way cautiously to Alma Hall, a four-story building which had stood; it being slightly out of the rush of the main stream. In this building were about three hundred people who gathered there seeking shelter. Many were injured. Separated families mourned the missing ones. Heartstrings were played upon as never before in our town. Rev. Doctor D. J. Beale (rector of the Presbyterian Church) rescued and in this building was asked to read from a Bible which lay upon a nearby table. He opened the book casually and the first verse he saw caught his eye. It was the forty-sixth psalm, the first line of which I will repeat for you: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Needless to say that everyone listened, that everyone prayed, and that this was a solemn and impressive occasion. At this service with bowed heads were Africans, Catholics, a few Chinese laundrymen, Jews and Protestants. They were driven into a corner by the common peril that had beset them all.

Here Dr. Mathews performed his duties heroically, with the few conveniences at hand. He was the only physician in this building and he did what he could to relieve these poor suffering people. So the first hospital was really in Alma Hall. Later Eimtraugh's Hall on Bedford Street was commandeered, and hospital equipment was rushed from Pittsburgh. When it arrived every bench, counter, yes even the floor itself was used

whereupon to lay the injured and dying. The story of the first patient, Mr. Hellreigle is both interesting and tragic. While being conveyed to the Fourth Ward school house on Adams Street, which had been decided on as a morgue, he manifested signs of life. He was then taken to the hospital where hypodermic injections of brandy were administered by Dr. Sheridan (father of Eula Geer and Jessie Grazier) and he was stimulated into consciousness so that he recognized his father. However, the slender thread that held body and soul together snapped and on Monday afternoon June third, he passed away from congestion of the lungs brought on by exposure.

Morticians from east and west came to the aid of their fellow tradesmen and assisted them in every way in performing as far as possible in a dignified and respectful manner the last sad services for these hapless victims.

## CHAPTER XX

### ANOTHER PAUL REVERE

You will naturally wonder why people, living in a low valley with floods threatening yearly and the added menace of an unsound reservoir, did not abandon their homes at the first sign of high water. Many of them did seek shelter on the hillside, with relations and friends. Some were imprisoned by the rising tide. For others it was the old story of "Wolf! Wolf!"

People had closed their homes in town many times, and had gone to the hills, only to see the rivers recede to their boundaries, and then to bear the scorn of those who had not sought safety. It is not easy for parents to leave their homes and plunge through water with families of children and stand in the rain and await the uncertain, which up until 1889 had always fooled the cautious. At this time telegraph was the swiftest means of communication from a distance, and while it saved many through the heroic efforts of our beloved townswoman, Mrs. H. M. Ogle, who gave her life to save the multitude, it could not reach all. There were the very young and sick children, mothers with new born babes, the aged and infirm with those who had the care of them. It seemed unwise and imprudent to force these people out of their homes to stand in the rain as they had done before. It seems to me a cheerful outlook kept many of them at home. The reason back of it however was the old classic of the "Wolf!" How different the story might have been had we had the wireless wonders then that we have to-day.

Speaking of the wires reminds me of an incident in the life of a young civil engineer, which makes my flesh creep when I think of it. The day of the flood, John G. Parke of Philadelphia was at the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club. The downpour had soaked everything and a cloudburst over the water-shed had filled the reservoir so that it had backed up the valley for miles. One of the feeders that had appeared before the freshet as a white thread, now appeared as a broad, brass colored river. As Mr. Parke watched this mighty body of water rising, ever rising, he thought of the hamlet of South Fork two miles below. He gave spur to his horse and shouted as he rode along. His warning was relayed by others and in this way the two thousand souls living there were all saved. He sent a messenger to the telegraph station to send an urgent warning to the people of Johnstown. The woman in charge tapped the key and to her horror she found the wire was "dead." She turned pale and sank in a swoon. When she was revived she was assisted by the messenger to a place of safety on the hillside. Mr. Parke unaware of the fact that the wires were down, and that his message would never reach Johnstown, felt he had done all that was humanly possible and so he returned to the dam. He stood watching this foaming, tossing, restless body of water, ten million tons of it, knowing full well that the greatest disaster in the history of our country was impending. The water came up inch by inch. Soon it reached the top (eighty feet above the bed) and spilled over the lip, and poured down the stone paving of the down-stream face, which had a slope of three feet horizontally, to two feet vertically. By this time glassy sheets were skimming over the top and he knew it was only a matter of minutes. Suddenly in the center and half way down a hole appeared in the breast-work and water shot straight out, as if from a fire-hose,

to the distance of about thirty-five feet. Then the center of the dam ripped apart, and the embankment moved away as the unleashed destroyer leapt out and downward with a mighty roar that echoed and re-echoed through the narrow valley. As the water plunged along its tortuous path, giant trees were snapped off like willow twigs and boulders were hurtled and tumbled along for miles. In this gorge the water rose to the height of one hundred twenty-five to one hundred and fifty feet above the river. The spur of a mountain jutting out at a curve was the first impregnable barrier encountered, and this caused a mighty rebound and a deluge of spray which was both magnificent and awful to see. The force of this blow stripped the mountains to the bare rock. Then the lumbering tide wedged its way through the narrow pass and disappeared forever from these parts as the young engineer stared in blank amazement.

The story of Paul Revere of the Johnstown Flood, to my mind had its inception in the ride of John G. Parke. By thought, common sense and sound judgment, he saved two thousand lives. His ride was a glorious one and as far as I have been able to find out it was the only one of its kind on that day, "believe it or not."

## CHAPTER XXI

### SEEING THE DAM SITE

Last year when Mrs. Uhl and I were visiting in Johnstown we were urged by our relations to stop on our way home to see the site of the dam. We had always felt we had enough of its contents and never wanted to see where it had been. However, time had rolled on and had taken with it much of the bitterness of the thought of the flood. The day was bright and beautiful, the motor humming pleasantly and we were in a happy mood after a most delightful week-end in our native city. From the agreeable company and the good roads I took courage to suggest that we follow the advice we had received, and incidentally the crowd, which we did. A marker lately erected soon pointed the way. It stands on top of the remaining half of the old breastwork. The new road cuts deeply through at this point. Mrs. Uhl and I climbed the steep embankment and found ourselves facing a pretty little lane with dappled sunshine filtering through. A growth of sturdy trees has taken possession of the ruins and with their lacy foliage has softened the outline. As we walked forward we looked up the valley toward the source of the lake. We saw a little creek meandering along, reflecting on its calm surface some sky and some fleecy white clouds, looking like a blue and silver moire ribbon lying between the dark green trees, that formed an arch over it.

When we reached the edge of the breastwork the very spot where the rip-rapping had parted we realized that

we were looking down at the dizzy depth below, on the forty-fifth anniversary of the big event. Thoughts jammed, and we stood staring, speechless. We then moved back instinctively as one person, where we stood trembling with emotion, in spite of the grip we had taken on ourselves.

We were impressed by the vastness of the hollow bowl below, and by the retaining wall, which was built of earth, huge boulders, and some fill, possibly of cinders which would form a stout bulwark for a mill pond perhaps, but which in our humble opinion was absolutely inadequate to impound this tremendous weight of water. If the breast-work had been one half mile wide, the water might have dribbled over it, or it might have poured over it at that time and thus mastered the situation. But with the embankment thirty or forty feet wide the inner face puddled with clay and rip-rapped with stone, the rest composed of earth and nondescript fill and boulders as described above, it was doomed to failure. As I looked at this, I could not help thinking of my father's words and of his anxiety. He knew this delicate, artistic embankment could never imprison the amount of water and rain that had come into it on that day. However, by way of vindication for my townspeople who had faith, let me add that the water rose to a height of eight feet above the level it was designed for, which demonstrated its stability under maximum freshet conditions, and showed that the people had some reason for their feeling of security. The thickness of the embankment, three hundred and eighty feet at the base and its up-stream and down-stream slopes were built in accordance with good engineering practised at the time.

As we walked back we could not help seeing that this had been a beautiful resort in its day. The sixty members whose aggregate wealth ran up to dozens of mil-

lions had built sixteen cottages, and a club house of forty-seven rooms, which nestled on the green slopes which bordered the lake. The breast-work of the dam had served as a bridge. As I followed Mrs. Uhl, I could mentally picture the prancing steeds, the carriages of latest and of finest design, with their carefree passengers driving back and forth over this viaduct in the cool of the evening, visiting cottagers who lived on the opposite sides of this beautiful "Conemaugh Lake" as it was called.

## CHAPTER XXII

### AMERICA BECKONS

The flood brought such confusion, and so many irretrievable losses, that it would not seem strange if tradition and family lore had been washed up for all time. However, this is not the case. We all know that after the most devastating plagues and catastrophes, the clans just naturally gravitate to the center of their power, and there again begin to build. The suffering has taught a great lesson. The survivor now looks both ways. From the past he grasps the most priceless of all weapons, caution and experience. Armed with these he charts a course of comparative safety for his family and himself, and he soon begins to dream of preserving their identity. This is as it should be, for it gives us all a broader field of interest. The horizon is moved back and like the cinema in reverse, we behold old landmarks; and surging waves of humanity come toward us. We feel a warmth radiating from our hearts as we see among the countless masses many familiar faces and scenes. The dominating figures and the dramatic events arrest our attention. We inhale deeply as we see their struggles, and we exhale heartily as we see their conquests and the many sunny patches along the way.

As we ponder over this vision we are face to face with the new day and we imagine the tomorrow. We feel as one who sits before her triple mirror which gives three-fold satisfaction at a single glance. We are happy in the thought that the past is not entirely lost to us but rather that it is hinged with the present and the future

to form, as the mirror does, a most helpful reflection. With this thought in mind I have added the following pages for my children, so that they shall not find the years in Johnstown entirely shrouded in unrecorded darkness. I hope the few names, dates and stories linked together in this chapter will give to them, as they have given to me, some measure of pleasure.

My maternal grandfather John Geis was a grandson of Michael Geis and a son of Conrad Geis and Anna Maria Flashentraeger, daughter of George Flashentraeger. This last name means bottle carrier. Whether that has any significance is beyond me. Grandfather's parents were married on January 26, 1813, at Blankenbach, Bavaria. Their attendants were Michael Geis and Frances, daughter of Adam Pfarr.

Their first child, my grandfather was born on May the 19th, 1815 (the year of the Battle of Waterloo) at Blankenbach. He came to America in 1838 and worked at his trade of cabinet-maker in New York for some time before going to Hamilton, Ohio, where he worked for a year. He saw America as a land of opportunity and he returned to Germany in 1841, to bring to Hamilton, Ohio, his parents, brothers, sisters and not least his sweetheart, Rosina Stein. Rosina was born on December 19, 1817, at Sonderkahl, parish of Ernstkirchen, in Kahlgrund, Bavaria, daughter of Elizabeth Rosenberger and Frederick, son of Andreas Stein. Frederick was a miller and Burgomeister, and employed seven people on his farm. When the party left Ernstkirchen, they were the first to leave from that parish for America. After six weeks on the ocean, enduring storms and mal de mer, they arrived with bag, baggage and twelve thousand gulden, which was considered quite a fortune in those days.

Among other things that our fore-bears brought to these shores was a German Bible which was copyrighted

under Emperor Ferdinand at Presburg, in February, 1564, and is one of the oldest German Bibles in America. This book was used when Vice-President Curtis took the oath of office in 1928. This was the first time that a Bilbe was employed by a Vice-President at the Senate Chamber ceremony. This book is now in the possession of my cousin Edward M. Geis, who is the eldest son of my Uncle William who was the eldest son of my grandfather. The Bible is kept in a case in a fire-proof vault in my cousin's home at Salina, Kansas.

When this group from the Fatherland reached Johnstown by canal route, Mrs. Conrad Geis took sick, so they were delayed. Then grandfather and his father looked around, became interested and they all decided to remain where they were.

My grandparents were married August 22, 1841, in St. John Gaulbert's church (English speaking) by Rev. Fr. Rattigan of Canada. He was visiting relations at Summit near Cresson, Pennsylvania, and he learned of the scarcity of priests in this district. He obtained permission from his superiors to remain in this field to help care for the mission parishes. So it was, that he came to Johnstown by canal route shortly after my grandparents had arrived.

Grandmother wore a calico print, as her purple silk wedding dress could not be located in their packing boxes. She wore a hat which belonged to Mrs. Cyrus Pershing (nee Royer) whose husband was later a judge in Schuylkill county.

It seems odd to think that neither one of my grandparents could speak English; but the language of the heart is universal so they had no trouble interpreting their wishes.

With part of the money brought from the old country to invest in the new world, my relations bought farmlands on the hills about three miles from Johns-

town. This plot is the present Geistown. Here are three cemeteries, one for the Germans, one for the English and one for the Hebrews. Lately an air-port was built adjacent to these cemeteries, on a level stretch of ground which makes me think that it is a landing place for the living as well as for the dead. I spent many happy, carefree days visiting in Geistown when I was a child. Grandfather and grandmother never lived there. Their first home was on the Island which became a memory with the canal. Later they lived on Clinton Street (next door to where Uncle Louis' store now stands, diagonally across the street from Quinn's store), before they moved to Main Street.

Many years ago (about eighty-six) grandmother was invited by her Geistown relations to visit them so that she could with fifteen or twenty women attend a "quilting-bee." The road to Geistown, even in my day was narrow and rock-ribbed and a severe tax on the driver as well as on the driven. We used to say that when the horses came to a particularly steep spot they looked like alligators, as they struck out and scrambled around trying to get a footing and at the same time trying to pull the load up the hill. So I can easily visualize the rocky ascent in grandmother's day. However, always eager to help in such pleasant tasks, she set out over the three mile length of rough country road. After a few hours of being jostled about in the carriage she reached her destination, and went to the party. She helped to quilt several pieces. A day or two later there was consternation in the household where she was visiting as an event not scheduled for that time occurred and my mother's young sister Barbara was ushered into the world. She was the only one in her family born in Geistown. It is with regret that I state the fact that the old stone farmhouse where she first saw the light of day has been torn down. A niece of grandmother

who lived in this house, lost her wedding ring the day she was married, and strange to say recovered it forty-eight years later near the site of the old farmhouse.

When as children grandmother lectured us about our playing with dolls all the time instead of learning how to knit and how to make shirts for our "papa," always adding "when I was a young girl in Germany we had to do" and so on, the same old story we all give in turn, we viewed her with suspicion, and judged her with skeptical young minds. We did not know then that she laid aside her fast flying needles only long enough to welcome the stork. For many years I have realized what a remarkable woman she was. Her energy was boundless. After her family had grown up she studied medicine and spent the last years of her life administering to many unfortunate families who had neither health nor money. Her charities were so far reaching that I feel some of the younger generation must remember her from hearsay if not from actual contact. She relinquished her claim to her share in her parent's estate in favor of those who remained around the old mill in Bavaria. Mrs. Anna Suppes Hay who wrote the history of the Suppes family told my sisters and me many years ago that we should write the life of Grandmother Geis. She told us many little anecdotes of her charities. I remember she finished her talk to us that day by saying: "Your grandmother lived about fifty years before her time. Now, girls, do get busy and write her life. I promise if you do, I will contribute a chapter, you may well be proud of, which will be all truth about your remarkable grandmother."

Grandfather opened a general store which was one of the first in town. It stood at the corner of Clinton and Railroad Streets. The former was at that time the main street as the canal controlled traffic, and Clinton Street led to it. In this store my grandfather traded

merchandise for wool and other commodities, as well as for money. He prospered, bought real estate and became a land owner of considerable proportions.

His store advanced with the times and gave such satisfaction that it proved a mint to my grandfather. His sons became associated with him in the business and my grandfather eased out of the active management of it. Other thoughts were gripping his imagination.

In 1867 he cast a glance over the Allegheny mountains, across the wide open spaces and saw beyond the Mississippi the fertile lands that would naturally advance with the building of the Kansas Pacific Railroad (now the Union Pacific). With the spirit of adventure which led him to America he went forth again and invested in acres of virgin soil in Saline County, Kansas. His two sons William Rudolph and John Joseph soon followed him to look after his interests, which were varied to say the least. One of these was a bank which grandfather established at Salina under the name of John Geis and Company, which opened in 1871, with Chauncey F. Ickes (Ick-es) as cashier.

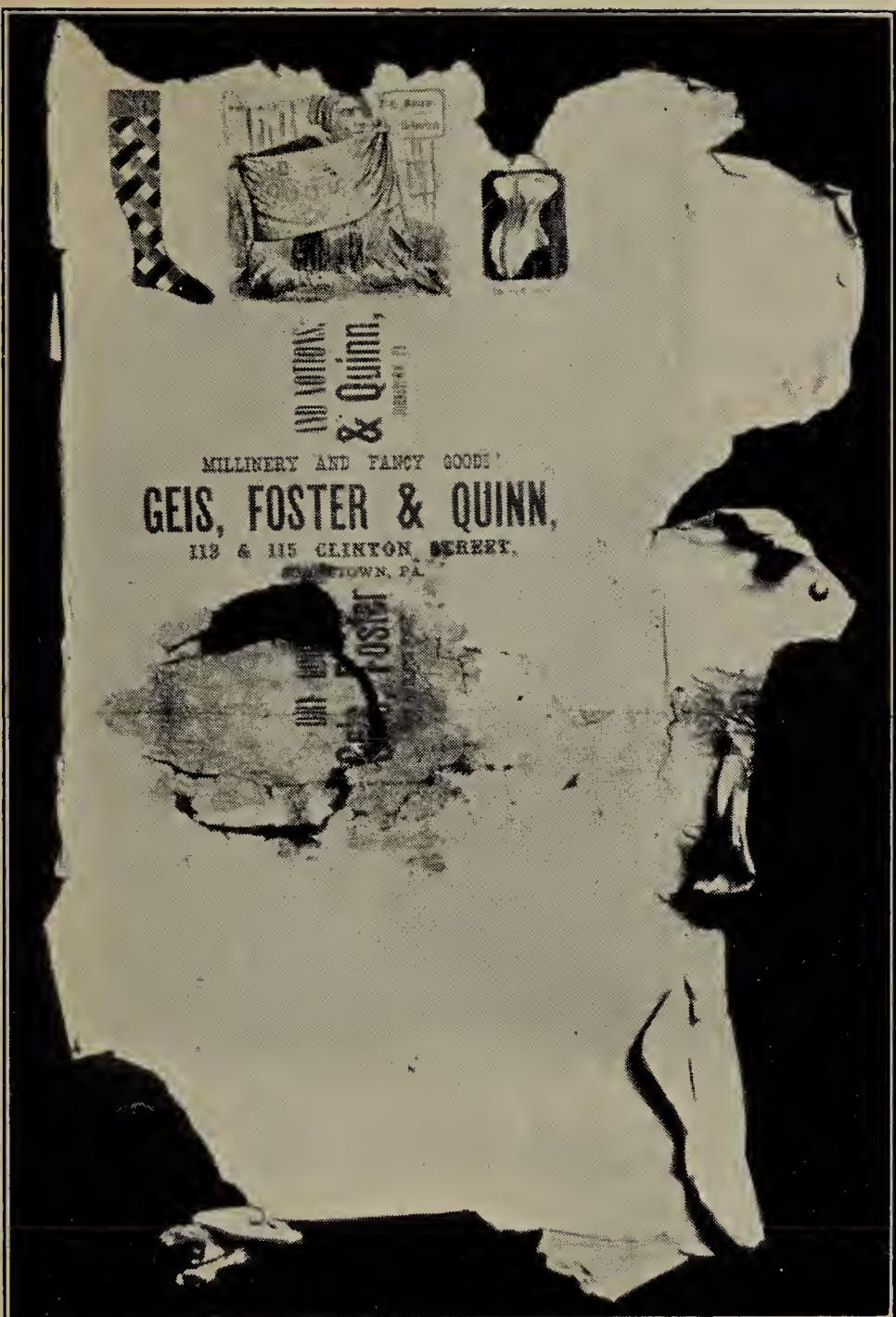
One day when my uncle was in the bank transacting some business, a big Swede walked in and up to him and said: "Bay yo da bong?" Nonplussed, but a diplomat, my uncle decided to keep the conversation open so that he might in this way pick out the meaning of these strange sounding words, without embarrassing the sincere, earnest looking man. It wasn't long until he realized the fellow was saying: "Be you the bank?" meaning, are you at the head of this bank, and if so will you take my money and open an account for me. (Planters State Bank now occupies this same building.)

Grandfather travelled back and forth between Pennsylvania and Kansas for several years. In the seventies he took as partners in his store in Johnstown his two sons-in-law, and the firm of Geis, Foster and Quinn

was established. My grandfather retired at the age of fifty-six and lived for nearly thirty years after. When he died in 1896 he left an estate valued at about a quarter of a million dollars which my father said was very little for the amount my grandfather had earned and amassed during his active life.

Uncle William came east and married Mary Cantwell, daughter of Dr. Terrence J. Cantwell formerly of Philadelphia, and Anna Green Head of Latrobe, Pennsylvania. They returned to Kansas where they made their permanent home.

In the eighties Uncle William and a number of other citizens of Salina bought a steam-boat in Chicago, for three thousand dollars, and called it 'the "Belle of Salina." It was used on the Smoky Hill River in Kansas for pleasure and for private gain, but failed through lack of patronage after the novelty of its operation had worn off. The lustre of the steamboat story as told to me by my parents has not dulled with the years. To my elders it was no doubt the first "white elephant" in the family, but to me it will always be a floating fairy palace. Uncle William was a great hustler. He owned, laid out and improved Oakdale Park. A race course and other features, familiar to a pleasure park were added. He owned and raced some of the finest and fastest horses in the county. He conducted fairs and other amusements for the benefit of the town. He and my Uncle John jointly owned a house furnishing store until the former's death many years ago. The latter then opened a large carpet and furniture store which flourished for many years. It is amusing to think that my grandfather's three sons distinguished themselves in the furniture business. I can only think of Jimmie Durante (Schnozzle) and say in unison with my uncles "It is the cabinet-maker in us." Kenwood Park a beautiful peninsula skirted by the deep and in-



*Photo by James Quinn du Pont*  
FACSIMILE OF WRAPPING PAPER USED BY GEIS,  
FOSTER & QUINN AFTER 1873



dolent waters of the Smoky Hill River belonged to my Uncle John. It contained about sixty-one and one-half acres, part of which extends into the river. He sold this land in 1917 to the city of Salina. It has since been used as a public park.

Uncle John retired from active business many years ago and with his wife, the former Theresa Divine of Pittsburgh (whom he married after Aunt Abbie's death in the flood) spends most of his time travelling. He is very fond of dogs and has not missed the Dog Show in New York City in thirty years. This I read some time ago in a New York daily. I smiled to myself when I saw this article for I thought of some of the experiences I had had myself with some of his blooded dogs when I as a tender-foot visited at his home. I had gone west in 1903 with my cousin Agnes Geis (now Mrs. Crawford, daughter of William Geis) upon her graduation from St. Xavier's Academy at Latrobe. Her brother Raymond, then a young man, was employed in the Farmers National Bank.

He had a row-boat, ready to be launched when we arrived. To honor me he called it the G. Q., and my initials were painted in dark red on the white boat. I drew a deep breath when I saw this. To christen the boat I struck the stern with a bottle of clear spring water, as the bow dipped into the river. At the same time I jokingly said:

"May you never be the cause of any drownings, but on the contrary may you be the means of saving lives." This was all forgotten until a few weeks later when two young girls and a young man went swimming near the spot where the G. Q. was tied. One of the girls became exhausted as she swam about in the deep water, and her cries brought the young man to her side. She seized hold of him in a death grip and they both would have gone down beneath the muddy waters of the

Smoky Hill River if the second girl had not untied the G. Q. and pushed it into the stream. The young man managed to grasp the side of the boat and thus they were both pulled to safety. Needless to say, the community gave three cheers for the G. Q. We spent many carefree hours on that boat enjoying day dreams which we thought not only ambitious but extravagant. Our generation had come down a peg in boats, it is true, but our dreams were on a par with those of our parents, and one of my fondest ones of those days materialized many years ago, when Raymond, erstwhile skipper of the hand-made flat bottom row-boat, became the president of the Farmers National Bank of Salina, Kansas.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### SOME OF THE CLERGY

My mother, Rosina Magdalena Geis, and my father, James Quinn, were both born in Johnstown, the former on June 30, 1845, and the latter on December 6, 1841. When mother was young, she was active, vivacious and like all girls very fond of nice clothes. She loved to dance. Her mother did not share her enthusiasm for dress nor for dancing and she frowned upon the prevailing fashion of hoops as a ridiculous and vulgar style. So mother left hers with her friends Justina and Amelia Fronhiser. (These sisters later married two brothers. Justina married Charles Kress and Amelia married Frederick Kress). On her way to a dance she rushed first to their home and amid the excitement and keen pleasure of enjoying the forbidden, she slipped into her hoop-skirt and joined the merry throng and they went on their way rejoicing. Mother sang sweetly and played her own accompaniments. She was a gifted conversationalist in which art I thought she had no peers. She frequently illustrated her character portrayals with facial expression and mimicry that for accuracy, beggars description. She was popular and dearly beloved by all who knew her. Later I shall enlarge upon some of her commendable traits.

My parents were married without the ceremony of the public announcement of their names in church for three consecutive Sundays, and also without the Mass. Right Reverend Bishop Domenec, head of the Pittsburgh Diocese at the time, who always stayed with my

grand-parents when he visited Johnstown, granted my parents a dispensation.

At that time a newly wedded pair was frequently serenaded by the band, and there were other demonstrations such as "Katzen-musik" as the Germans called it (which was made by youngsters armed with tin pans and all sorts of noise makers) which mother felt she would rather not have.

So they secretly slipped over to the rectory of St. Joseph's German Church and were married on Sunday afternoon, September 24, 1871, by Rev. Fr. Otto (Kopf) of the order of St. Benedict. I had forgotten about this quiet wedding until recently. It amuses me for when my turn came to march (this word I use with much meaning as I connect it with the army I married) to the altar, I balked at the publicity too and I ended by being married just as my parents had been before me, sans Mass, sans publication of the banns; which is quite unusual for practical followers of our faith. (For those who do not know of the army I married I can only quote my childless brother-in-law, Joseph A. Slattery, Esquire, of Philadelphia, who when asked about the size of his family always said: "My brother Frank and I have eight." This was before I came in 1916.)

In mentioning Bishop Domenec a story comes to my mind which my mother could tell to perfection. In the early days when there was no parsonage in Johnstown, my grandparents always entertained at their home the visiting clergy. The little children in the family learned to call the old four-poster in the spare-room the bishop's bed. It was sacred to him and to others consecrated to the service of the Church. On one occasion when Most Rev. Bishop Domenec was expected my grandmother had worked hard to have everything in readiness for his coming. The room was washed and scrubbed, and all lambrequins and linens were changed and everything

was spic and span. The pillow shams were standing up straight with their starched and crimped ruffles, covering the huge pillows and lace-edged pillow slips. After surveying this room with pleasure and deep satisfaction, my grandmother descended to the first floor to superintend the final details of a sumptuous dinner. In the meantime one of the little children had run out of the front door and the latch was left open. Along came one of the town's most famous characters familiarly known as "Kaiser" (which name he had given himself as his hallucinations had led him to believe he was none other than that august personage). Seeing the door open, he walked in and straight for the front stairs and through the hall and entered the hallowed chamber. The child returning from the street ran in the house, upstairs and through the hall and stopped to take a peep at the room into which he had been told not to venture. What was his surprise when he saw this dirty, filthy, hoary old fellow with his nose nestled in the fine feathers sound asleep. The child lost no time in calling his mother and the excitement that followed is too much for my pen. Suffice it to say that grandmother lost much of her dignity in her haste to reach this room. She was followed by a disorganized household of children and hired women. As she approached the scene of horrors she summoned what control her shattered nerves would permit. Her eyes narrowed and then opened round as saucers as she beheld this frowsy, scowsy and so forth fellow in the immaculate bed. She advanced with mingled feelings of fury and pity. However, the women working for her had only scorn and venom in their hearts and they urged my grandmother on to a tirade against "Kaiser," all of which I have forgotten excepting a few snatches which I shall try to put together as I remember them. "In des Bishop's Bett! Ei, du liebe Gott im Himmel! Raus, heraus, du

schrecklicher, dreckiger Esel!" Which translated means something to this effect: "In the Bishop's bed! For the love of God in Heaven! Out! get out of here you terrible, filthy donkey." After grandmother relieved her chest of this pressure she dried her eyes and called some men from my grandfather's store and with combined efforts they got him up and out. The poor women of the household had to strip the bed and carry all the trappings to the clothesline in the yard. Their work had to be done over in double-quick time, as the honored guest was approaching as you children say in slang, "on horse-back." I imagine grandmother sprinkled a double dose of holy water as well as eau de Cologne over the entire room before the foul atmosphere was cleared for the venerable gentleman. This dear old man died January 5, 1878, in Tarragona, Spain.

At about this time there was a death in our relationship and the old German who sent his bill for driving a carriage to the cemetery worded it thus:

"To John Geis,  
4 thalers for howling (hauling) at a funeral."

Time has softened the thought of the sad occasion but to me it has not taken the edge off of this, my favorite short story.

Before I get too far away from stories of the clergy I should like to present for the edification and delectation of my children, one of the most romantic figures of our own Pennsylvania Alleghenies in the person of the young Russian nobleman Demetrius Augustine de Gallitzin. A tiny thread recently woven into the old fabric of his life's story may create for my children, as it has for me, a feeling of personal interest.

Demetrius was a son of a prince of the highest rank, and his mother was a daughter of a Field-Marshal under Frederick the Great. Though he seems far removed

by time (he was born before 1770) I can link his life to my own family through his assistant. My interest in this amazing young man was first kindled by Mrs. Pauline Farabaugh Schwab of Loretto, Pennsylvania, mother of our friends Gertrude Barry, Sister Cecelia, Edward H. and Charles M. Schwab.

Many years ago Mrs. Schwab visited at our home (she is now in her nineties) and she regaled our family with stories and descriptions of Prince Gallitzin, which she had heard from some of the early settlers who knew him personally. Later at Cresson I learned more of the history of this young man. From infancy Demetrius held a commission in the Russian army. It is intriguing to visualize him in a setting of the Russia of his time.

A kaleidoscopic glimpse by way of thought brings before me a handsome, sensitive, kindly face. A young officer in shining boots, white uniform, a sable edged cape with colorful lining flung across his shoulder.

In the background a mosque wherein tapestries and oil-portraits grace the walls between the tall windows draped with heavily embroidered brocades.

Mirrors catch and reflect the light. At the far end of this lordly hall in broad filagree frame richly adorned with precious stones, a large and beautiful ikon hangs above an ornate gold-leaf shelf whereon stands a jewel-studded challis with lighted taper, which grows dim, and flares up and lends life to the enigmatic expression of the Virgin, who holds a chubby infant, with shining halo above His tiny head.

From the dome in the vaulted ceiling a golden cord holds aloft a crystal chandelier whose myriad of candles, tier on tier, cast a mellow light over the gay assemblage below; music lovers all. They have come to the courtag (concert) to hear the songs, and to listen to the soft sweet strains of the ckpunka (violin) and other

stringed instruments, which seem to sing and sigh as the bow is drawn back and forth. From this musicale a young and thoughtful person steals away, and time marches on. A new country stirs the imagination of the world and Prince Gallitzin is inspired by the stories that find their way back to the mother country.

When he expressed a desire to travel his parents sent him to America with a friend Rev. Mr. Brosius. They landed in Baltimore, Maryland about 1790.

Shortly thereafter a peculiar train of events led this young man's thoughts to things ecclesiastic. If I knew any of the circumstances which influenced him I would gladly state them. The secret, if any, is his, as far as I am concerned. I know only that he renounced his birthright, cast aside the trappings of the world, placed himself in the hands of Bishop Carroll of Baltimore, and donned the garb that marks the man of God. Surely there is reason for saying: "the Lord moves in a mysterious manner, his wonders to perform."

Hearing of the settlements in the Alleghenies, he left Conewago, Maryland, set his course north and arrived in the year 1799 (the year George Washington died. Easy to remember because at the time it was the last month, of the last year, of the last century). Father Gallitzin joined the little band of sturdy pioneers who had asked for a spiritual adviser and together they selected a commanding site high in this rugged country and Father Gallitzin named this place Loretto.

Here he helped to build a rude cabin which gave him shelter for thirty years. Luxury and fame were forgotten. He spent a princely fortune in the interest of his parish. He practised the most rigid economy so that he could better care for the poor and the distressed. Through his influence and labor in the course of time, churches, schools, a seminary, a college, and a priestly order were founded all having their roots in the hamlet

of Loretto. When age overshadowed him, the Rt. Rev. Coadjutor Bishop Kendrick of Philadelphia sent (in 1834) a curate by the name of Henry Lemke (lately arrived at that port from Germany) to assist him in caring for his parish and the missions connected with it.

These were scattered over a wide area. In fact his church "forty-four feet long and twenty-five feet wide, with walls of pine logs, and a good shingle roof," was the only one of its denomination between Lancaster, Pennsylvania and St. Louis, Missouri, between the Susquehanna River and the Mississippi. Within the bounds of this vast territory was the little hamlet of Conemaugh Old Town (later re-named Johnstown). Prince Gallitzin was the first spiritual guide of the five or six families of his faith in this settlement.

A few years after Father Lemke arrived, the saintly Demetrius passed to his reward (in 1840) enshrined in the hearts of his friends and their descendants. He slumbers in the church-yard of the little town he founded and named.

In 1898 a group of students, including myself from the Academy at Cresson (five miles away) made a pilgrimage (on foot) over the dirt road to Loretto to see the chapel containing some of the mementoes of this now famous prince-priest. During our visit we descended into his windowless tomb to view his remains which were visible through the glass lid of his wooden coffin. Our escort, a nun with lighted candle in her hand, led the way. To tell the truth I was awed to the point of near prostration. As we stood looking at the remains of the once dazzling young prince, a girl in our group blew out the light and at the same moment murmured something to the effect that ghosts were walking and we would all be in the clutches of the same if we did not get to the surface that instant. Needless to say

we all scrambled to the steps that led to the exit, and we stamped our way to the sunlight where we stood puffing and panting with our hearts in our mouths. The nun emerged slowly and with dignity announced that she was sadly disappointed in her class. I think we were the last group to enter this sanctuary for shortly after this (I have heard) the vault was sealed up forever, which I think is proper. Surely one who shrank from all glamour and practised self-abnegation as his religion should not be exposed after his death to the prying eyes of the curious. The girl (a niece of a prominent State Senator) whose childish prank probably brought about this reform married into a noble family of Europe. Years later during the World War, she died at her villa near Rome and after much red tape her remains were brought to this country and interred in the family plot in Pittsburgh.

Of Prince Gallitzin a life size statue in priestly garb stands upon his tomb, a dignified monument to the pioneer nobleman who gave up the world when it appeared most promising, to serve his God with true humility.

In the course of time when Father Lemke visited in Johnstown he met my grandparents. The German language was a strong bond and they became very friendly.

Years later (about 1885) when he became ill and was on his death bed my mother went to see him and took with her my oldest sister, Helen then a very young child. Father Lemke with long white flowing beard, pale thin face and emaciated form presented a picture that frightened my sister nearly out of her senses. She tried to pull away from my mother and at the same time she made such grimaces that this keen old man though deathly ill raised himself a little and said:

"Was fehlt dem Kind, sie sieht wie eine wilde Katze

aus," which means: "What ails this child, she looks like a wild cat."

Helen likewise thought the poor old man looked like a wild animal, but she was stifled by fear, and for all I know she may have stared him to death. (Grandmother quoted Father Lemke for our edification to such an extent that I find it hard to think of her now, without the echo of his name in my ears.)

After Helen grew up and heard so many inspiring things about Father Gallitzin she found some pleasure in telling this story, and she usually finished by saying something to the effect that she could scarcely believe she had been in the company of one who had lived for several years in the house with the illustrious Prince Gallitzin, whose life's story sounds like a page taken from a book of medieval times.

Loretto has given to history two famous adopted sons, the subject of this sketch and the genial, lovable steel master Charles M. Schwab. When motoring through Loretto one may feast one's eyes upon Immergrun, his beautiful estate.

If one is interested in the saintly prince-priest, one may enter his humble chapel which has become somewhat of a shrine. During the day it is open to the public and the nuns in charge will take pleasure in escorting visitors through the chapel and showing them the few mementoes of this most heroic figure, Prince Gallitzin of the former Royal House of Russia.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### MY MOTHER

I feel this book would not be complete without at least a brief sketch of my versatile and interesting mother. She inherited the dominating traits of her parents, who were as different from each other as day from night. Like her mother she was deeply religious and she participated in the social as well as the religious side of every church endeavor. She was charitable, almost to a fault. She distributed regularly to her pet charities a certain percentage of our income. Coupled with these virtues was the keenest appreciation of material things and business ability second to none, absorbed from her sagacious father.

After a year at boarding school where she felt the pangs of heimweh, her father proud of the progress she had made in her studies, and pleased with her keen insight into business and her helpful suggestions as to the management of his own store, gave my mother at the tender age of fourteen (about 1859) a store on Main Street and stocked it with four thousand dollars' worth of merchandise. Here was launched the first business career of a woman in the town. Her brother William aged sixteen joined her and took care of the books. Her exquisite taste, combined with the charming personnel of her establishment created the institution of "Rosie and Billy Geis" known to every man, woman and child in the town. Her store was outstanding from the day its doors opened and it flourished through the Civil War years and left mother's hands in



*Photo by Zimmerman*

THE AUTHOR'S MOTHER, AND BROTHER, TOM (1894)



1873 when Vincent her first child was born. My father at the same time became a partner in the store of his in-laws.

For sixteen years, mother enjoyed her home and family and felt that she was definitely out of the lime-light. However, the "knock-out" blow struck by the great flood, stirred her to action in the old field and she joined my father and they opened a store that was a delight to the feminine eye and heart.

After this wherever we went we heard complimentary stories of our mother's prowess in business. We grew up in this atmosphere and watched her tactics and enjoyed her grasp of all things pertaining to a trade. Those who dealt with her never need suffer the agony of thought that they bested her in a bargain.

We did not feel the urge to follow her. With the keen competition and the complications of a modern business it is probably fortunate that we walked out before we were put out.

In the years that followed the flood we entertained and teased mother not a little about her foresight and shrewdness. All merchants know that July and August are slow months in the dry goods realm, so much so, that these months were (at least when we were young) designated as dull season. It so happened that my five sisters over a period of years, were born in the month of July.

When we grew up and people commented on this fact we tormented mother by telling her she was so keen on business that she had a contract with the stork to deliver in dull season a daughter every other year. Thus she stocked up against a lonely old age, and at the same time her walking advertisements cut down the tremendous cost of raising billboards and rearing females. She took all this teasing good-naturedly, though blushingly.

The combination of her parents' outstanding traits was remarkable. Few people could know my mother without realizing this. I remember my father with facetious expression one day saying: "Between God and Mammon your mother is a busy woman, she serves them both with equal zest and zeal." She enjoyed the sly thrust for she knew it was the truth. Now these two traits brought about a situation which afforded our family a great deal of amusement at one state of our lives. As she sent checks to the orphan asylums and to the out-posts of civilization where religion was struggling for its existence, she in turn received blessings from these grateful people in the form of all sorts of religious articles. Medals being cheaper, lighter and easier to send, they came in greater quantities. So the more prosperous we became the more checks my mother sent; the more checks she sent the more medals she received. House cleaning time revealed the fact that her wearing apparel was actually being crowded out of her bureau drawers by these articles. An abandoned valise was then filled and finally two suit boxes were added to hold these gifts. They were stored in a large closet in my mother's room. As time went on and the medals kept coming, mother repacked many of them and sent them to the Indian and Negro missions, in which she was interested. In spite of this outlet the medals piled up, so we began to tease her. We called the cupboard where the relics and medals were stored, the Vatican. When she first heard this her mobile countenance was a study as the smiles and frowns raced over her face in rapid succession. However, she maintained her Christian dignity and she urged us to have more respect for things holy. She clasped about our young throats, gold chains and silver chains, with bright little medals suspended from them. Soon she added other medals which were pinned to our undervests. We loved these

when we were tots, but as we grew older and the medals given us were larger and heavier, they banged together like cymbals when we jumped the rope and played other strenuous games. We became conscious of them. The thought soon followed that our entire family of children would grow up to be the most round shouldered people in the town. Fortunately before our bones were set, we were considered old enough to wear scapulars; and the medals (speaking for myself) were discarded. This, however, only added to the situation. The medals kept rolling in; every mail brought its share and soon they became a problem for action. House-cleaning time always brought on more talk on this subject. One day when the Vatican was brought out to be dusted and cleaned my mother was amazed to see the number of medals. She really was deeply touched by these simple gifts and the letters that accompanied them, but the fact still remained that in spite of her remailing many of them to the Indians at White Earth, Minnesota, to the Negroes in the Carolines and to the Eskimos in Alaska, the cupboard was overflowing with them. As she had such an eye for business we finally suggested to her that she send them to Quinn's store, pour them into a bin and put a sign on it "medals, ten cents a quart." (For the benefit of those who may not know I must add here that articles that have been blest cannot be sold under any circumstances). When we manacled her so to speak, with the two strongest links in her make-up—religion and business, she was "on the spot" as we now say. Her quick perception of this fact brought a tense moment as we stood with bated breath, not knowing what her final reaction would be. Never were there such numbers of fleeting tell-tale expressions on a human face at one and the same time. Fortunately for us, her sense of humor got the better of her and she broke down and laughed until she cried,

as we all did. The quality of my mother's humor imparted to her nature a resiliency or buoyancy that made her a positive power in times of stress. The way she helped my father and others pull out of the mire after the flood is ample proof of the truth of this statement. That she veiled many of her charities, so that those benefitted would not be conscious of any future obligations was the noble unselfish way in which my mother ministered to many.

That she educated for the religious life, at boarding schools several worthy young persons, was one of the many fine things my mother found pleasure in doing for others.

Thus far all I have written of my mother has been on the pleasant end of her charity, the giving with kind thought as the only effort back of the gesture. This was as nothing however when compared to her practical side. Boundless energy sustained her in reclaiming to health and happiness many unfortunate families and friends. I do not think I am overstating a fact when I say she was in herself an institution for the downtrodden and forlorn. I remember when I was a tot, my mother took me to the tumble down house of a destitute old lady, generally called "Granny Cute," the last name being her surname, and the bait with which my mother lured me to her home.

When we arrived I beheld an old woman whose voluminous nightie might have covered "Sweet Marie, the Woman Mountain" of side show fame, instead of the wisp of a human before us. Beneath the ruffles on her sleeves I could see her red flannels and on her head she wore a nightcap to match, which ran up to a point in the rear and at the top of her head. A narrow tape tied under her chin held this cap in place. She was propped up in her four-poster with her scrawny knees

under her chin forming a wish bone of no mean dimensions.

Here, mother set the room in order and performed the duties of a trained nurse, while the old lady, famous for her tart remarks and comical retorts, in squeaky voice away up on G, vent her spleen on the subject of the frailties of the flesh. My mother laughed until the tears came. She then left me for a few minutes and the old lady kept casting sidelong glances at me and mumbling to herself, and my heart kept pounding and expanding, and just at the bursting point my mother, all smiles, popped into the room. In her arms were groceries to stock the shelves. When we left, mother went in quest of a reliable woman to cook and care for this bed-ridden old soul. The flood swept Granny Cute into eternity, but she was not forgotten in my mother's thoughts.

The top of her charities to me was her intense interest in a worthy colored woman, mother of a large family of small children. A fatal illness brought this woman to dire straits. To make a long story short my mother spent weeks in trying to keep the house stored with provisions while the neighbors carried them off almost as quickly as they were delivered. She secured a housekeeper and the services of a doctor. Finally, when death ended the sufferings of this woman, mother planned to have the children kept together in one family. The infant daughter, neglected and half starved, was brought to our home. Here she received care, medical attention and soft warm clothing, all sadly lacking in her tragic young life. About a week later, early one frosty morning mother took me, aged ten years with her to Pittsburgh, to deliver into the hands of the Sisters of Charity at the Rosalia Foundling Asylum, this puny little bundle of humanity which I loved as a living doll. I shall never forget her feeble cry, no lung

power back of it. Three days after we left this infant, mother received a letter from the Sisters, telling her that the baby's spirit had found its way to its mother in heaven. We both smiled through our tears.

That she visited in prison a condemned slayer who had neither kith nor kin to care was another gesture of her great heart. She sent him a basket of fruit, and left a book in his cell. Her sympathy roused him from a state of hard-boiled bitterness to one of complete resignation. She quoted comforting lines from the Bible and the poor wretch went to his death bolstered up by the thought that a loving God, both merciful and forgiving would find a corner in one of the many mansions of His Father's house for him.

The relief agencies if alive, were in their infancy following the flood, so public spirited and benevolently inclined citizens assumed the responsibilities of those who could not make the grade. That mother embraced these opportunities to serve, and discharged the duties with grace is putting it mildly. I have only skimmed over the surface of her remarkable career and her charities. I cannot go more deeply into this phase of her life, for a recital of her corporal works of mercy would fill a volume. Suffice it to say that she met every emergency and found unalloyed pleasure in ministering to the weak and the unfortunate. Her life lived for others, was a happy one. If I said less than I have her many friends and their children would be disappointed. For my part I shall leave the complete story of her practical charities to the unerring hand of the One who has recorded it in the Good-book beside her blessed name.

In concluding this sketch I should like to quote from a letter received from a cousin in which she said of my mother: "What a wonderful recital the life of dear Aunt Rose (Rosina) would make; her great charities,

her happy disposition, getting all the best things in time and in eternity."

Here too let me "dip the colors" to her partner in life, who worked hand and glove with her. Much credit is due him, for my mother's sympathetic nature knew no bounds, and my father had to manage the finances.

One day my mother entered our store during the church festival season, when the demands on her were especially heavy. My father, realizing this and knowing her weakness greeted her with a smile and at the same time he stepped between her and the old Barnes safe and said:

"Madame, I draw the line here." She laughed heartily at the implication that the safe would be carted off in the name of sweet charity, if a stand against such a move had not been taken.

During the time we lived on Locust Street the telephone came into its own. My father rather dubiously invested in one for our store. Sometime later one was installed in our home, and as children we used to make a trip to our store to call our house, just to see if the contraption would work. It was a thrill to stand up to the old box on the wall and "ring up" central, while your heart throbbed, and you meekly stuttered the number you felt you would never get. Sometimes a buzzing noise accompanied your conversation; but that was to be expected; wasn't a miracle being wrought just the same? This buzzing suggested to some wag the idea that birds flying on and off the wires, caused this static, as we now call it. This joke was quite stale when one day I happened to be in our store when a customer came in and asked if he could use the telephone. My father said, "Yes, sir." The man went to it in fear and trembling and seemed to turn pale when the buzzing

began, and he could not make himself clear to central. Perspiring and excited he came over to where my young friends and I were and he told us about the noise. Thinking he had heard about the birds we told him the noise was caused by birds sitting upon the wires. He rushed to the back door looked out, and fortunately for his peace of mind the wires were tipsy with sparrows. So my friend and I offered to chase them off if he cared to try again. He did care to. This time his message went through clear as a bell. He came away fairly crying for joy, his eyes sparkling, his face red and shiny, and he mopped his head as he thanked us for our part in his first telephone call.

In the meantime my father heard the snickering and laughing. We saw him lay aside his book and pen, knit his brow, but that was all for we flew through the back door and scampered away. I was afraid to go home that afternoon, for in business there is nothing so upsetting to the proprietors as to have their children or the clerks make light of or play jokes on the customers, even when they both would seem to be justifiable.

When we moved to Locust Street, Helen was in her 'teens, and when we left there my youngest sister Marie was the only one in her 'teens. So you see we all grew up in that house. Shortly after we moved to Locust Street we met some newcomers to our town, whose names have since appeared in *Believe It or Not*, by Ripley.

These men were Joseph Kirk Love and his brother the late Frank S. Love who came from Somerset, Pa., and the late William H. Sunshine of Pittsburgh, Pa. These men cast their lot with our town and established the wholesale grocery and candy manufacturing companies under the auspicious name of Love, Sunshine & Company. These names coupled with the name of a trusted employee, George Bliss, attracted the said Mr.

Ripley. My sister Helen and I as friends of this firm made the two trade marks which are used by these companies.

Myra Love, wife of Dr. William W. Lerman a prominent physician of Pittsburgh is a sister of the Messers Love mentioned in this book.

The late Russell Uhl was in business in Somerset, Pa., for years as a partner of George H. Love, father of Mrs. Lerman.

On October the twelfth, 1901, my sister Helen Augusta was married to Evan Morgan du Pont in the parlor at 535 Locust Street by Rev. John J. Boyle pastor of St. John Gaulbert's Church. She wore a white silk heavy crepe dress and instead of a veil she wore an ornament in her hair which belonged to Ethel Halleck du Pont (Mrs. William Kemble du Pont of Wilmington, Delaware) who with her late husband Bill (brother of Pierre Samuel of Longwood, Pa.) who was best man at the wedding lived at Moxham at the time. In the face of the fact that we had a store and carried a fine line of wearing apparel and accessories for women I cannot understand this unless it was to follow the custom or superstition that something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue had to be worn by a bride if she expected to live a charmed life. This was the first wedding in our family and I remember the large crowd in the two small rooms. It was well for the comfort of all, that the du Ponts and our relations who attended the wedding were tall and thin instead of short and broad.

During the time we lived on Locust Street my cousin Alice was married to the late James A. Skelly of Greensburg, Pa. After making their home in that town for a few years they moved to Salina, Kansas.

In 1904 my sister Rosemary married James Greene. A few months after her wedding my parents bought

from our late friends and old neighbors Molly Cover and her husband Charles B. Hamm our present home at 624 Main Street, which is directly across the street from the auditorium, the site of our birthplace.

In February, 1912, my mother was in New York City shopping in the interest of our store. She was suddenly stricken ill, and was taken to Hahnemann Hospital. My sisters, Rosemary and Helen with the latter's husband left Johnstown within a few hours after receiving a message from New York. At the time T. Coleman du Pont was in New York City and my brother-in-law got in touch with him and through his influence we secured the services at a consultation of nine of the outstanding physicians and surgeons of that period who were attending a meeting at the time in the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel at 5th Avenue and 34th Street where the Empire State Building now stands. However, mother was beyond human help and she died five days later on February the 27th, surrounded by eleven of her closest of kin. In that great city in which we all felt lost at that time Mr. Coleman du Pont took charge of all the sad details for us, and we shall never cease to think kindly of him for his sympathy and gracious assistance.

In our new home on Main Street we enjoyed the environment of the neighborhood of our childhood. Many years of happiness rolled away at a rapid pace. Business crept along our street and we were hemmed in as you may see our house today.

In 1912 the great shadow that passed over our family changed a merry outlook to a serious one, and many of our fancies became hard facts. The hours did not stand still, and five years later on July 2, 1917, we suffered a second great sorrow in the death of our beloved sister, Helen. Memories of her in her early teens striving to keep a younger group interested in the worth-while

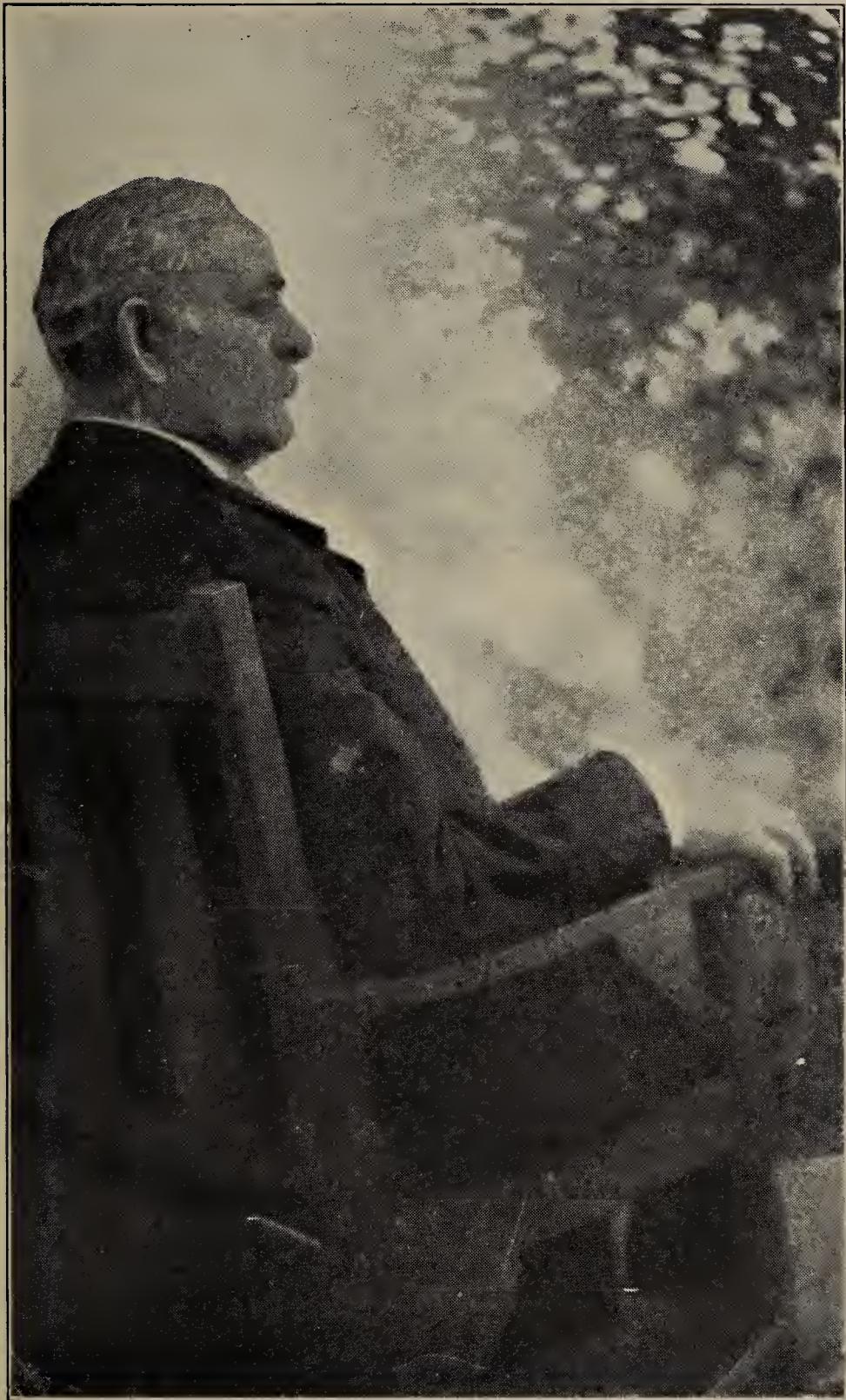
things of life ; caring for these not too tractable children who in the confusion of those trying times sought ever a loop hole to escape discipline. Memories of her managing our assorted household where diplomacy as well as love had to play a part, when mother joined our father in a concerted effort to recoup our losses. Through all the hardships my sister maintained her hold on our affections and also on her own personal dignity. The efforts she made in our behalf grew out of a heart filled with pure sincere motives. In a few years she grew up into a beautiful young woman, with a radiance of expression second only to that born of a deep inward spirituality, which surpasses sheer beauty. To her children she has left a record of a full life spent in an endeavor to make the pathway easier for them. Their large and beautiful home which was built with thought for each child's comfort and pleasure is a monument to her artistic ability. It stands on a knoll overlooking the rolling countryside, which has become our most beautiful residential section, and is known as Westmont. Beside her husband mentioned before, she is survived by the following children: James Quinn, Biedermann Thomas, Rosina, Ellen Coleman, Dora Prichard, wife of Alfred Lynn Williams, Esquire, of Chicago, Ill., and Billy Bayard du Pont, a student at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

## CHAPTER XXV

### MY FATHER

In the 'fifties, Johnstown, with the rest of the country was going through a depression. My father, a small boy with red cheeks, large brown eyes and flaxen hair, in his 'teens was taken out of school. This was tragic for he was an apt pupil and he loved to study. However, a position was in the offing. His mother, a judicious person scrubbed him until all the natural expression was wiped off his face. Later his father called him from his play and marched him down to the stately home of an influential citizen. With his heart beating like a trip-hammer he told me he was so nervous when he found himself standing before his own stern parent and the forbidding looking stranger with the appraising eye, who by one word might put him in the mill and separate him forever from school and play, that he trembled visibly, stammered, and made such a poor impression on the high and mighty that the latter finally said "take him home, he won't do, I am sorry for your sake, but we can't use the boy." At the sound of these unexpected words the mingled feelings pent up for hours overwhelmed my father and he told me he could not restrain the hot tears that flowed down his cheeks, as he closed the gate on that dreaded job, and dogged his father's homeward footsteps.

In spite of the disappointment of his parents he told me his joy knew no bounds and that all his life he was secretly grateful to the man who turned him down. Father had seven sisters and two brothers, so in hard



JAMES QUINN, THE AUTHOR'S FATHER



times his parents had problems comparable to our own and my latent sympathy goes out to them in spirit. My father had it while he lived. He never returned to school. Later through friends he secured some congenial work. My father, as a man, was quiet and dignified. He had an insatiable thirst for good literature and a lust for learning. To me he represented a walking encyclopaedia. He loathed slang and never brought himself to countenance it, no matter how apropos it was or how well it expressed or shaded a thought. He never relaxed his vigilance over his children on this subject. He loved the best, the artistic and was when drawn out an eloquent talker. He spent most of his life in books.

I am only beginning to realize the torments he must have suffered when we were young. With his mind absorbed in the classics and his ears assailed by the latest slang-hits many of them hurled at him from his own brood, as they played strenuously around the very chair upon which he sat. How he managed to lose himself in stories and remember anything he read in those years is beyond me.

I now appreciate his efforts in our behalf, and it is the pride of my life that he was so exacting, and one of the regrets of my life that the course he charted was too steep for me and that I still think George Ade is the nuts!

When war drums rolled, my father at the age of twenty joined the Union forces in April, 1861, and left with the Johnstown Zouaves under the command of Captain John P. Suter. This company was among the first to arrive at Camp Curtin, Harrisburg, after the first call of President Lincoln for seventy-five thousand volunteers. His second enlistment was as First Sergeant in Company A., Anderson's Troop, Independent Cavalry, under the command of Captain William J. Palmer,

who later became Colonel of the 15th Pennsylvania Cavalry when Anderson's Troop almost to a man joined with other units and formed this regiment.

Father also served as Sergeant in Company D., 28th Pennsylvania Volunteers. At the close of the war in April, 1865, he was Captain of Company G., Fifteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry. He was identified with Emory Fisher Post No. 30, G. A. R., and also with the Loyal Legion of the United States.

When President Johnson went through Johnstown on his famous speaking tour, the whole town crowded the little station platform which had a tunnel under it for the trains running in and out of the mill yard. As the train stopped, the crowd surged forward and all the weight was on the one spot over the tunnel. The platform sagged under the strain and fell. The people were tossed and jammed in such a violent way that eleven were killed, and among those fatally injured was father's sister Mary Jane who died the following day. Hundreds were on crutches. My own mother had her cheek-bone broken and her house guest, Priscilla Petticord was cut and bruised. Anna Suppes (referred to earlier in this book) a very young girl, a friend of mother was sent to the store with a china dish to get some lard. On her way she saw many of her friends running to the depot. She forgot about the pies for dinner and she followed the crowd.

When they brought her out of the twisted mass of wreckage they found a frightful gash on her face made by the broken fragments of the china dish. The scar of this wound she carried to her grave not so many years ago.

After the crash the train pulled out immediately for Altoona from which town the President sent a message of sympathy and a check to help those who were in need following the terrible accident.

Grandfather Quinn was a contractor, and while in partnership with John Kingston, they built part of the famous old Portage road. Grandfather died in 1877 and Grandmother in 1887.

Of the latter I have but one recollection. As she lay dead in her home I remember some adult took hold of me under the arms to raise me up to see my grandmother. In so doing, my head was jammed down on to my chest and my shoulders were rammed up over my ears, as I hung suspended in mid-air from the arms of the well-meaning person. One glance was enough! I thought to myself that I had never seen anything more terrifying in my life. If my curiosity had prompted this person to lift me up, I was more than satisfied. I am sure no wild cat ever sought cover with more fear in his heart or more haste in his heels than I did on that day, as I scurried off and found shelter beneath a sofa upon which my parents were sitting at the time.

In my father's war record I mentioned the name of Colonel William J. Palmer. (As a young man he was private secretary to J. Edgar Thompson, President of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, with offices at Philadelphia.) After the war when he returned to civilian life he became in time the well known railroad magnate of Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was an expert horseman and enjoyed this sport for many years. However, one day when he was past fifty years of age he was thrown from his favorite mount. He received permanent injuries which confined him to a rolling-chair. Thus shut in, his life was changed from one of great activity to one of quiet repose, where thought alone could release his spirit. So it happened that as he sat one day in his beautiful garden he dreamed of the long ago. Out of the past came an army of young men in blue, on their gallant chargers dashing up hill and down dale in all the vigor of their youth, following

with avid faith their leader. As the last charger disappeared from this realm of blessed enchantment a new thought came forth.

So it was that (thirty years ago) Colonel Palmer invited all the survivors of his regiment to visit him. There were several hundred who made the trip. They met at convenient points along the way where private cars attached to the regular trains met them and carried them to their destination. The Antlers Hotel, a fine new building was chartered for ten days to take care of these men. All expenses were paid by Colonel Palmer from the time each man left his home until he returned to it many weeks later. They came from the four corners of the earth. One old soldier came from China. I think this party or reunion with the "boys of 61" and with Colonel Palmer and his charming daughters (one of whom made the trip from her home in London, England, to help her father entertain his guests) was one of the happiest events of my father's declining years. He was not one to "shoulder a crutch" and tell how battles were fought, in fact he was the very reverse. His pleasure lay in seeing again his Colonel whom he respected and loved; and in meeting his family and in being with them at their beautiful home "Glen Eyrie" one of the show places of the state. (Bus drivers point this out daily to tourists). When father returned, my mother by way of appreciation of father's enjoyable visit sent an exquisite lace handkerchief to Miss Palmer. When she was married a short time after this she wrote and told mother she had carried the handkerchief on her wedding day as it was the most beautiful one she had ever seen. Its value I well remember as I was awed by the large numerals I saw on the pin-tag as it was removed, when the 'kerchief was boxed in tissue and be-ribboned daintily, as mother's gifts always were.

You can imagine our interest in the tales my father told when he returned. I shall never forget his detailed story of the trip to the lofty heights of Pikes Peak; of his feelings as he stood aloft among the clouds surveying the broad expanse above and below. Later his words and graceful gestures as he described a trip to the Garden of the Gods. Here, at dawn one might see the mist rise in fantastic form in sheer ribbon-like vapors of rainbow hues, that shifted and drifted in fairy-like fashion among the towering stalagmite-like rocks, grotesque and sublime. One could only gaze in silent admiration and awe at such exquisite harmony of color, as the golden sunshine drew high lights and shadows over this vast Eden, which knows no limitation in the range of variegation.

Could anything be more pleasant for children in the course of their lives, than to look back and realize that their parents had some outstandingly happy experience such as this visit brought to my father in the evening of his life?

Activities outside our store which claimed my father's attention were varied but not unusual. He was a stalwart Republican, and a stand-by for his party in the days when it was largely in the minority in our section. Later when conditions changed and things looked rosy for the Grand Old Party and father was sought as a candidate by his constituents, he steadfastly declined political honors.

In 1881 he became a trustee of the Johnstown Savings Bank which he served for more than forty years. He was a member of the school board, and was prominently identified with the old Johnstown Board of Trade.

He was active in the Union Benevolent Association which was our first organized welfare society following the flood.

When John D. Roberts, well known banker (father of Mrs. Harrison W. Latta of Philadelphia), died in 1923 my father succeeded him as president of the Johnstown Savings Bank.

Of my beloved father let me add that he represented to me everything I admired in a man. For many years the children of our household have called me "Mrs. Micawber" because I have quoted my father, and held him up on all occasions as an example. I feel fortunate indeed in having had such a father as he was and I have always accepted the title with some pride. In spite of the humor of it, I feel it is the finest tribute any child could pay to a parent. I feel quite sure too, that in time the title will descend to each one of the children under my care.

My father lived to be eighty-four years of age. He died September 10, 1925.

Here too, I must tell something of my father's family. They all died when I was so young that I remember very little from actual contact.

Fragmentary bits, such as the time when Rosemary (now Mrs. James Greene) and I sat upon Uncle John's knees and parted his beard in the middle. We each braided a side and I inter-twined and tied my plait with a red ribbon while Rosemary tied hers with a green one. The effect was colorful and comical to say the least. I remember how heartily we, and all our elders laughed as my uncle stood up and showed the fancy work we had done. We exacted from him a solemn promise that he would not remove these gay little ties when he went out. I recall quite clearly the shock when some time later we were telling this story and mother said: "Did you little girls really believe your Uncle John went to town with those bows on his beard?" Grandmother did not change her name by her marriage. She was Rose Quinn (daughter of Mary Booth and John

Quinn) and she married Thomas Quinn. This pleased me when I was a child and I questioned my mother about it, and she laughingly said: "I suppose your grandmother did not want to lose her "Q" (cue)." At the same time she told me grandmother used to carry a little bag of candy (lozenges, I think she said) in her pocket to give to children afflicted with whooping cough, carrying out an old superstition that such persons could help in this way.

The story of the candy mystified me then but not now. I interpret it to my entire satisfaction every time I hand out a cough drop or "Life Saver" to one near me seized with a sudden fit of coughing.

Grandmother's youngest child was Tommy. One day he hung his bag of marbles on his four-poster bed and forgot about them. He grew up and later he became ill and died when he was twenty-two years old. Grandmother never allowed the marbles to be moved, and they hung there for years, in fact, until the flood carried them away with the house.

From mother I learned that my Uncle John was an expert steel worker; that at one time he had a fine position in the steel mills in Maryland, and at the same time he sent his sister Letitia, a beautiful girl, to boarding school near Baltimore.

Besides my brother Vincent, my father suffered the loss of his last surviving sister and brother in the flood.

Aunt Ellen would not leave her home on Franklin Street, although father had gone to warn her and insisted on her coming with him. She felt secure in her brick home which had been built after father's parents had bought the lot in 1825, which we own to this day. So Aunt Ellen, with her girl of all work and my Aunt's little dog Dandy, all went down with the house. Uncle John was so frightfully injured internally that he died the next day in the second story of the old Parkes Johnstown Opera House where he had been dragged

when found near the corner of Main and Franklin Streets.

My Aunt Ningie of Pittsburgh often told me Aunt Letitia was a beauty. I asked her if she thought Aunt Letitia was as pretty as my sister Helen (Mrs. du Pont) and she answered that Helen was very much like her, but that she thought no one could compare with Aunt Letitia in looks. I have always felt Aunt Ningie was loyal to her generation; to me no one could ever surpass my sister Helen. Aunt Ningie said father's sisters were all nice looking, great students, and tireless readers. Mother told me one of them read from Shakespeare at a public recital in the Library Hall. I remember this story well, as it left the impression on me that my Aunt was an actress. Aunt Rose, a graduate of State Normal School, Millersville, Pennsylvania, taught the high grammar grade in the public school and according to the records of an old newspaper she received a salary of fifty dollars a month while the other teachers received forty, twenty-five and fifteen dollars each a month. This was about 1879. She taught for years and many of her pupils were outstanding in after life. The late John H. Waters was a shining example. Herbert Weaver, the late Frank Williams and his brother, Homer D., president of the Pittsburgh Steel Company (married to my friend Clara Troemner Suppes) were also pupils of my Aunt Rose. Recently Elizabeth James Ingram of Los Angeles, California, a sister of Mrs. Uhl, mentioned in this book, told me she had gone to school to my Aunt Rose, and she spoke in glowing terms of her ability to impart knowledge to inquiring young minds. My mother's hallowed opinion of my father's sisters stimulated my imagination and filled me with regret at their early passing.



HELEN QUINN DU PONT (1899)



## CHAPTER XXVI

### CONCLUSION

In rounding out my story I must go back to the reconstruction period following the flood.

As time went on, work and thrift brought order out of chaos. Many changes and improvements were made. The firm of Geis, Foster and Quinn was dissolved. The three families, two of them with growing children were looking into the future and the wisest plan for all concerned seemed to branch out independently. So in a few years a three-story building was erected on the original lot which is thirty by ninety-five feet and the store that enjoyed the confidence of the community and which stood for quality rose from the ruins and thrilled us with the sign over the door, "Quinn's Dry Goods and Millinery." Under this heading came everything for the home, the family and mi-lady excepting carpets, furniture and shoes. Quinn's did a flourishing business for a lifetime and passed into history in 1918, when the World War called my only brother Tom to the colors. My father at the same time retired as he felt he could not at the age of seventy-seven shoulder the burden of a modern business.

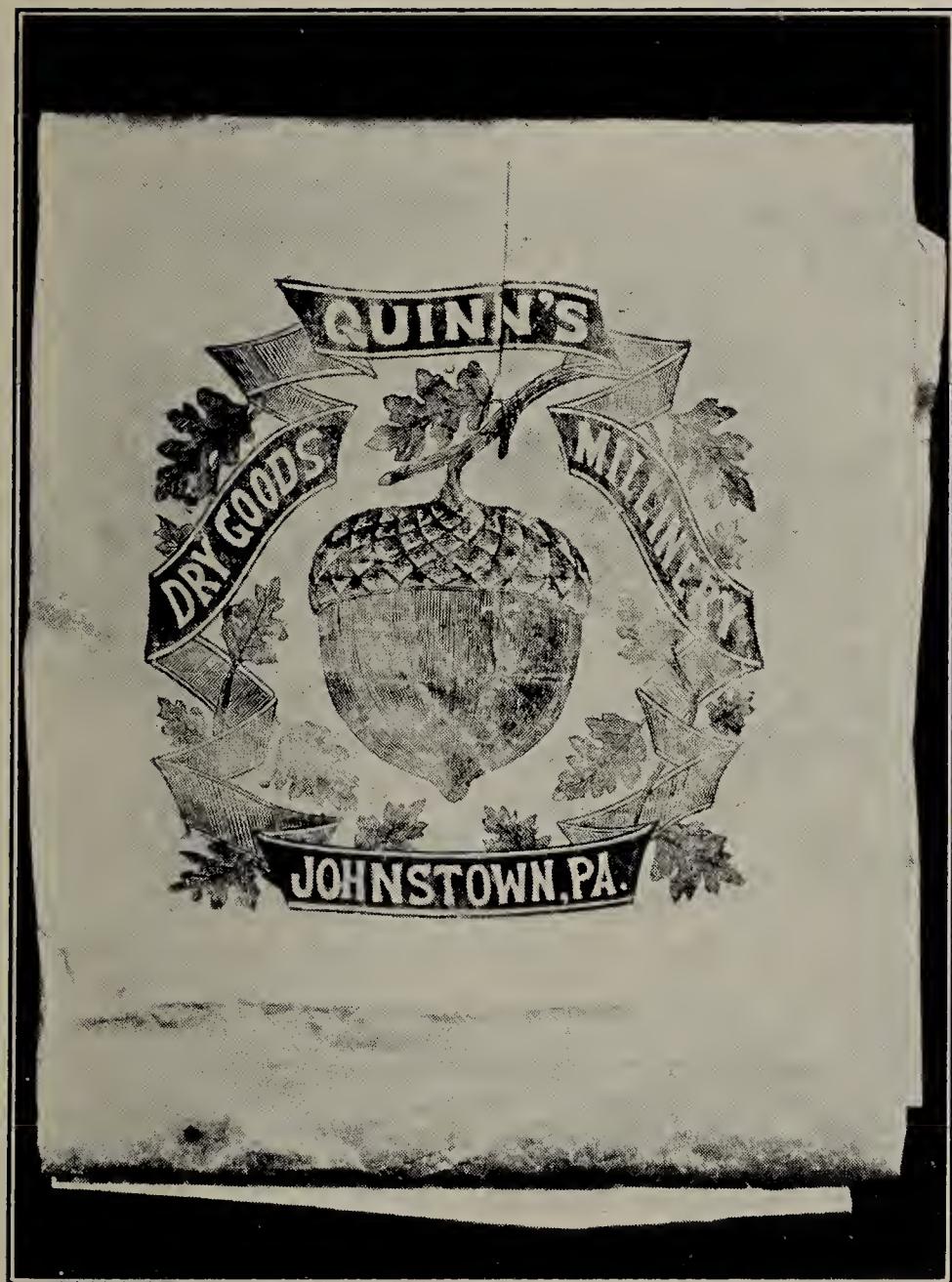
Tom saw active service in France, was wounded in the battle of Argonne at Romagne, October 27, 1918. He was in the hospital six weeks and was returned to his command after the Armistice. He won a scholarship at the University of Bordeaux where he spent four months studying while awaiting transportation to this country. The Fosters with their family of five sons

have continued in the dry goods and carpet business. (Three sons have passed away. William R. and Richard A., employed in the store and George Andrew, a lawyer.) James has assumed the leadership of the store, since the death of William. Several years after the flood Uncle Louis married Mary Fries of Cleveland, Ohio, a lineal descendant of Adam Pfarr, whose daughter Frances was bridesmaid at my great-grandparents' wedding in 1813, in Bavaria. With four sons, Frank, Carl, John and George growing up, my uncle opened the large furniture and carpet store (referred to before in this book) called "Geis," with the slogan "Another Name for Good Furniture."

Carl Geis, who distinguished himself in the World War deserves honorable mention. His platoon early one morning was surrounded by the enemy, who put down a barrage and then followed with a raid. He with three runners had to fight his way out. In a close encounter Carl, with his revolver killed an officer and two of his men. He in turn received a few particles of an exploding grenade. In a letter to his parents he wrote: "You have probably been notified that I have assimilated a bit of shell casing. My wound is a minor one. In fact, I hope to be back with my regiment in three or four weeks at the outside." Casual conversation in war times, but in peace times, blood curdling and almost unbelievable.

My Uncle Louis' only daughter Elinor, a singer and talented pianist lives in New York City.

When mother saw the streets a week after the flood, she said it would be ten years before the place would be cleaned up so that business could be resumed. You will appreciate how powerful was the will and determination of this stricken city when I tell you that in a few years the town was fairly humming with activity. Rebuilding everywhere, thanks to the generosity of the



*Photo by James Quinn du Pont*

FACSIMILE OF WRAPPING PAPER USED BY QUINN'S  
STORE AFTER 1889



outside world; new suburbs springing up yearly, and the mills, the backbone of our town, sending up that shower of golden sparks nightly, proving to a confident community that prosperity was in our midst again. I hope gratitude will ever be in the hearts of those saved from the flood; that they will never cease to think kindly of the outside world and their own countrymen in particular, who, with moral and monetary support, came forward so magnificently when all seemed lost forever.

The flood, a thing of the past, like a shadowy curtain of foul vapors, was drifting back to the ages.

The old and young generations stood shoulder to shoulder to meet the dawn of a new era.

The strong and ambitious came forward to the center of the stage, where ingenuity, brawn and muscle gradually changed the strange setting. The tragedy had been enacted, and now the good troupers were cast in a drama, where success and sunshine filtered through; where comedy and laughter would have their part.

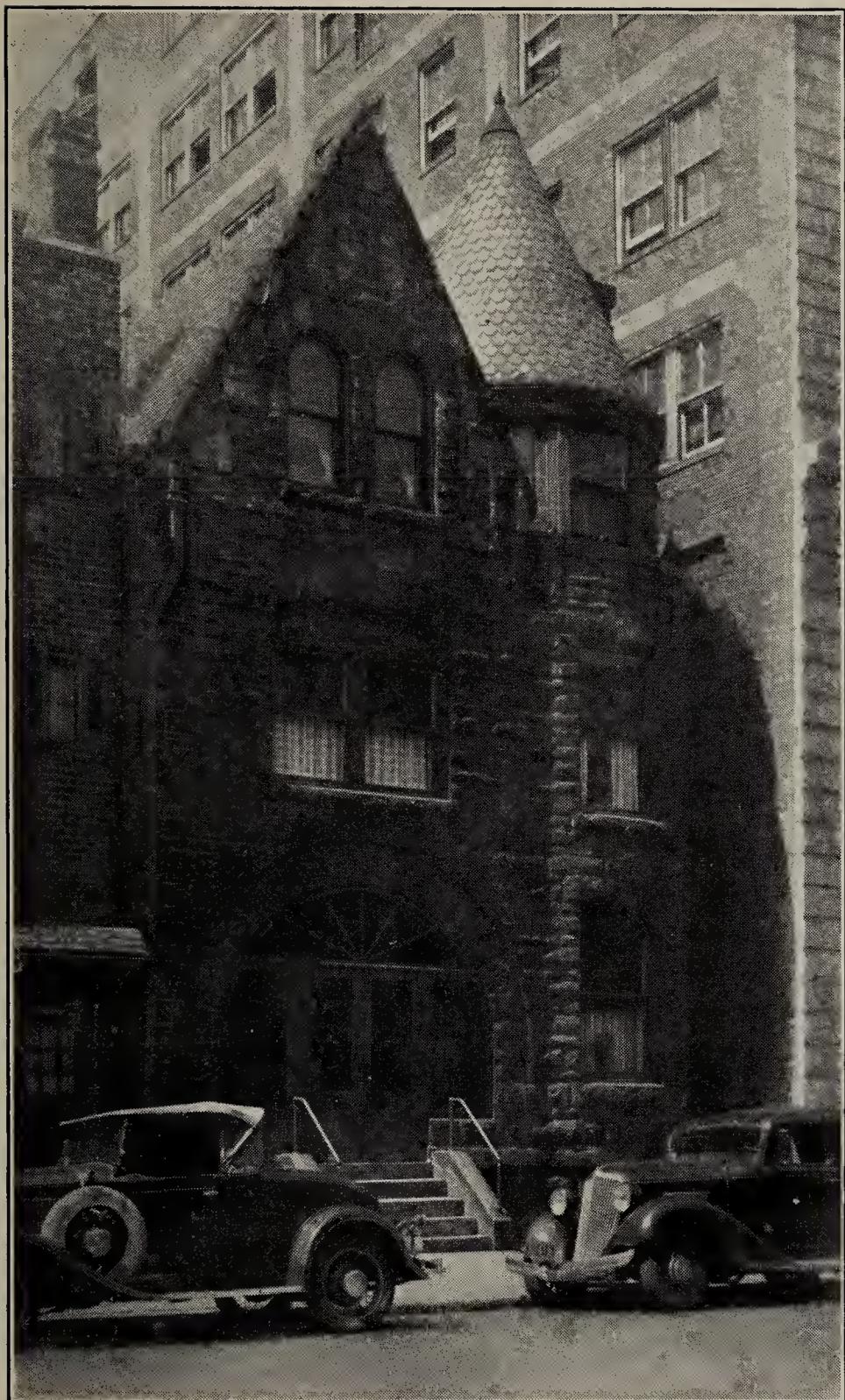
It is here I like to pause, and in fancy see my parents with sorrows softened, difficulties surmounted; happy in their ability to give more than the bare necessities of life to their children; and to see good fortune crowning their noble efforts; but most of all—to see them in their own home surrounded by those nearest and dearest.

As Time, called the "Great Healer," went on and we were living in our restored city, our lives were again normal. We, as a family, had many happy, carefree years together, before our home ties were broken.

I have not felt it necessary to branch out to any extent in this narrative, on that subject, because I think you all know we had happiness in abundance through the years. The heart and mind while scarred are ever filled with love and hope, and while we drained the cup of bitterness to the dregs, we learned early in life that

looking backward would not help, so with faces to the east, we took our places in life, as I like to think to myself, each one to her easel or tapestry to use the colors in such a way that when completed, it is viewed as a finished picture worthy of the material at hand and the love and care our parents exerted, so that it may hang on memory's wall, a credit to them, and an inspiration to our children.

**FINIS**



*Photo by James Quinn du Pont*

THE QUINN HOME AT 624 MAIN STREET, JOHNSTOWN













